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OF NORTHERN
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BARCELONA FROM £143**

NO TOKEN COLLECT

Peace in our children's time

Sarah Helm
Paris
Mary Dejevsky
Washington
Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

Playing to the crowd, as always, Boris Yeltsin flamboyantly flourished a pen, keeping the world waiting just a few more moments, before grinning broadly and signing on the dotted line.

The long-awaited Nato-Russia security pact, clumsily called the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Co-operation and Security, was finalised at last. Seven years after Nato "stretched out the hand of friendship" to its Warsaw Pact enemy at a ceremony in London's Lancaster House, the West's alliance yesterday offered Mr Yeltsin a permanent partnership and a strategic relationship.

The Yeltsin pen was raised once more. At the treaty that puts a formal seal on the end of the Cold War and creates the basis of a security pact spanning the Northern hemisphere from Vladivostok, Jacques Chirac, the French President, started to clap quietly. He was one of 16 Nato leaders who, in a suit and a ripple of applause swept the Elysée's Salles des Fêtes.

Mr Yeltsin and Bill Clinton stopped to chat for a moment to look at a copy of the treaty. It was a significant turning point yet in Nato-Russia relations.

Mr Chirac, in the red, red-tipped Cour d'Honneur outside, red-tipped in the breeze on the helmets of the French President's Republican Guard, the only uniforms on show on this "partnership and peace".

Yeltsin was once again looking for cameras which nearly smashed the Elysée chandeliers as they swung in for this next photo opportunity: the moment when Mr Yeltsin and Xavier Darcos, the Nato Secretary-General, sealed their new pact with a kiss.

It had been, from the start, one of those kissing, hugging, patting, days.

Anxieties were, of course, in the air. Mr Chirac had to try to put the French elections to the back of his mind. Mr Yeltsin caused a minor flurry of concern in Nato high command by making a surprise announcement about nuclear warheads, which nobody seemed to understand. And the question of whether Russia would "follow up" the new pact was already being hotly debated in the corridors.

In the end, however, no worries were allowed to taint this latest "new dawn".

For Mr Blair, in his first outing onto the world stage, the love-in with Mr Yeltsin be-



History in sight: Tony Blair and Bill Clinton exchanging confidences during the signing of the Nato-Russia security pact at the Elysée

Photograph: Reuters

gan with a private breakfast at the Russian residence. Over blinis and smoked salmon, Mr Yeltsin flattered the new Prime Minister, telling him he had "good eyes, the right mind, the right age and good experience". In fact, added Mr Yeltsin: "I believe Great Britain is in the right hands." Mr Blair accepted his invitation to visit Moscow later this year when a joint declaration on fighting international crime will be signed.

And the Foreign Office announced that as part of the new spirit of goodwill, a British Moscow liaison officer will be attached to the Moscow embassy from next month.

At the Elysée, Mr Clinton, leaning on a stick, and Mr Yeltsin, looking frail, took their seats for the speeches. "I will be candid with you, reaching agreement has not been easy," said Mr Yeltsin. But, he said, the partnership "is a victory for reason".

Mr Chirac declared the deal was "built on the ruins of World War Two—from now on we can banish old reflexes and help develop mutual trust." Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, said that never again must the "pursuit of prestige by nation states be allowed to bring about war".

The British Prime Minister struck a more personal note. "My father fought in the last great European war. I was a child of the

Cold War era, raised amid the constant fear of conflict... no such fear exists today". It was Mr Blair and Mr Clinton who featured most prominently in the final photo opportunity as the President gave the British Prime Minister an enthusiastic thumbs-up.

Mr Clinton's triumphal day was marked by news from Washington, where the Supreme Court gave the go-ahead to a court case brought by Paula Jones, a former state

“Ours is the first generation able to contemplate the possibility that we may live our entire lives without going to war or sending our children to war.”

Tony Blair

“This NATO will work with Russia, not against it... these are new times. ... The veil of hostility between East and West is lifted.”

Bill Clinton

“Everything that is aimed at countries present here, all of those weapons, are going to have their warheads removed.”

Boris Yeltsin

employee in the President's home state of Arkansas, who has made sexual harassment allegations against Mr Clinton. The possibility that a President could face sex charges threatened to overshadow a trip from which he had been expected to emerge as world statesman *par excellence*.

Presidency at risk, page 2
Cold War spy-master escapes jail, page 12
New détente, page 14

Clarke leads, Lilley coming up outside

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Just three dozen Tory MPs hold the key to the Conservative leadership contest, with Kenneth Clarke in the lead and Peter Lilley coming up as the dark-horse challenger.

An *Independent* survey of the six campaign groups shows that more than one-third of the 164-strong electorate of Tory MPs has so far come out in support of a contender, with big-name sponsors such as Michael Heseltine being held in reserve.

Campaign managers want to "spin" out the announcement of high-profile backers, as the Labour Party did with its celebrity catches during the election campaign.

But *The Independent* has established that in addition to the six contenders — Mr Clarke, Stephen Dorrell, William Hague, Michael Howard, Mr Lilley, and John Redwood — 53 MPs have so far publicly declared their support.

In addition to that, there are another 27 whose support has been identified within the campaign groups but is being held back, either for tactical reasons or because the MPs do not wish their views to be made known to their local parties.

So far, Mr Clarke's campaign has the public backing of five former ministers, but his supporters say that they have identified the "certain" votes of

another 41 MPs, giving him a total of 47 votes so far.

Under the first-round rules for 10 June, a candidate needs a majority of those entitled to vote — 83 — and a majority of 15 per cent of those entitled to vote — at least 25 votes — over the runner-up. As things stand, Mr Clarke is leading the field, but he falls short of the 83-vote hurdle.

However, his supporters be-



Peter Lilley: Described as John Major without the charisma

lieve that if he can get between 60-70 votes on 10 June, he could manage to get the extra votes needed to win a second-round ballot on 17 June, when 83 votes are required to win.

Certainly, the former Chancellor can expect the six votes that will go to Stephen Dorrell in the first round, but other camps doubt Mr Clarke's ability to make further headway.

If Mr Clarke does not get 60 votes in the first round, or if doubt sets in, then MPs are expected to start switching in search of the winner. At that point, Mr Lilley could begin to pick up significant support from across the party.

One potential eventual Lilley voter said yesterday that he was "John Major without the charisma", but he preferred him to the right-wing alternatives of Michael Howard and John Redwood.

William Hague, who began as an early favourite in the leadership race, appears to have badly blighted his copybook with his criticism of the "constantly shifting fudge" of John Major's leadership of the party. He is unlikely to be forgiven for that blunder — critical with an electorate that is "so small but perfectly formed".

The calculations being made by the different camps yesterday showed that there were possibly more than two dozen genuine "don't knows" or "won't says" left, with a further 10 MPs floating between candidates.

That critical mass of about three dozen MPs — including former ministers — Nicholas Soames, Alan Clark, Cheryl Gillan, David Heathcoat-Amory, and Robert Key, not to mention John Major — will decide the result. But for the moment, no one knows where they are heading.

Campaign action, page 6

British firing squads executed boy soldiers

Steve Beggins and Anthony Bevins

At least five of the 307 British soldiers sentenced to death during the First World War were under age but were still executed by firing squads, it emerged yesterday.

As the Government came under increasing pressure to grant a blanket pardon to the men — many of whom are now believed to have been suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder — details came to light of how the boys met their death.

Records suppressed for 75 years show that three of the 307 were just 17 when they were shot for desertion. The records of a further 85 men do not show their ages, adding to the uncertainty over the fairness of their courts martial.

As reported in yesterday's *Independent*, John Reid, Minister for the Armed Forces, is reviewing the case for a pardon following the success of a campaign by Andrew Mackinlay, Labour MP for Thurrock, who believes most of those put to death were little more than confused, frightened young men.

Research by another campaigner, war veteran John Hipkin, 72, shows that the three boy soldiers who were shot at 17 — in contravention of the 1879 British Army Act — were Herbert Burden of the Northumbrian Fusiliers, Joseph Byers of the Royal Scots Fusiliers; and

Herbert Morris who had travelled from Jamaica with the British West Indies Regiment.

Two others — William Hunter of the Loyal N. Lancashire Regiment, and James Crozier of the Royal Irish Rifles — were shot at 18 but it is believed their offences were committed when they were 17. In any case, none under the age of 19 should have been serving overseas at

the time. Burden was just 17 years and 3 months when he was executed for desertion. At his court martial, there was no-one to speak for him because his battalion had been so decimated that all his friends and colleagues were dead, in hospital or transferred to other units.

Byers, the first under-age soldier to be shot in the war, enlisted on 20 November 1914,

was shipped to France on 5 December 1914 after two weeks' basic training and was executed for desertion on 6 Feb 1915.

Hunter had run away at 17 after falling in love with a French girl. At his court martial, Lt Gen Henry Wilson recommended mercy but he was overruled. Wilson later became an MP and was executed by the IRA.

Crozier was recruited at 16 by an officer, Lt Col Frank Crozier, who was amused at finding a would-be recruit sharing his name. He promised Crozier's mother that he would look after her son. However, Lt Crozier later signed the boy's death warrant for desertion.

"These were just boys and the army knew it, but they just wanted to make an example of deserters," said Mr Hipkin, whose own father lied about his age in order to fight. "God only knows how they could look into the face of a boy and sentence him to death."

The historian Julian Putkowski, co-author of *Shot at Dawn*, said: "I believe there were probably many more boys who were executed. Many lied about their ages and even their names, but none of them should have been there before the age of 19."

"What is more disturbing is that in some of these cases, the records show that the officers knew the men they were sentencing to death were too young and should simply have been sent home."

THE INDEPENDENT

**Labour
pardon
for war
'cowards'**

Yesterday's exclusive story in the *Independent*

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Byers, the first under-age soldier to be shot in the war, enlisted on 20 November 1914,



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Queens seek surrogacy deal
A gay male couple, both of whom are disabled, declared their determination to seek a lesbian couple to enter a surrogacy arrangement to provide them with a baby, despite opposition.

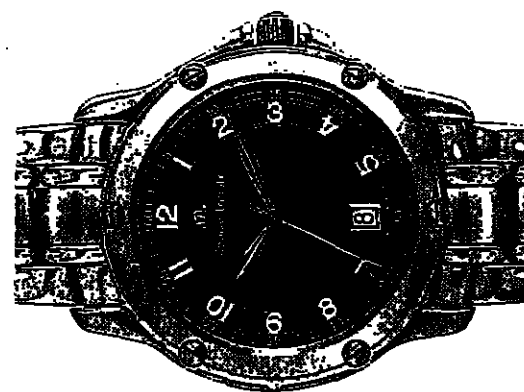
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news

significant shorts

Former nurse arrested over hospital deaths

A former nurse was yesterday arrested in connection with the deaths of four people at a hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne. Kathleen Atkinson, 47, from Wallsend, Tyne & Wear, was a nursing sister in the intensive care unit at the Royal Victoria Infirmary. She worked at the hospital for 17 years, and was being questioned about the deaths of four patients between 1991 and 1995. A spokeswoman for the hospital said: "At this stage the trust cannot comment further other than to stress it is co-operating fully with the police investigation." A police spokeswoman said: "We can confirm that a 47-year-old woman has been arrested and is being questioned in connection with [the] deaths."

Mowlam in talks with loyalists

Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, is to have talks today with leaders of the loyalist orders in a new move to ease tensions over disputed parades in Northern Ireland this summer. Meetings have been arranged with the Apprentice Boys in Londonderry and the Orange Order in Belfast. All sides fear trouble over a number of contentious marches through nationalist areas.

Cabinet-maker wins £12m jackpot

Last week a cabinet-maker, this week a multi-millionaire. David Ashcroft, a 30-year-old Liverpoolian, was confirmed yesterday as the single winner last weekend of the £12.3m National Lottery jackpot. He realised he had won the £12,353,363 fortune while at home watching the draw on television, and slept with the ticket under his pillow until he could collect his prize. True to new-millionaire tradition, Mr Ashcroft stressed the money will not change him. He wants to buy new equipment for his workshop, and treat his relatives. He set up in business at 17 with the help of a £1,000 loan from the Prince of Wales Trust and said the trust might also benefit from his new-found wealth. **Matthew Brace**

Policeman jailed for hiding evidence

A police constable who concealed vital evidence in a murder inquiry to protect his son, a prime suspect, was jailed for four years yesterday. Edmund Ross, 46, an officer with Northern Constabulary for 23 years, was found guilty of deliberately hindering investigations into the murder in Orkney of an Indian waiter, and of attempting to defeat the ends of justice. Shamsuddin Mahmood, 26, was shot dead while working in a Kirkwall restaurant on 2 June 1994. Mr Ross's son, Michael, 18, is still a suspect in the investigation. A spokesman for Mr Ross's legal team said they were considering an appeal.

McAliskey fights for daughter's bail

Bernadette McAliskey, the former Irish nationalist MP, yesterday renewed her campaign for her daughter Roisin to be granted unconditional bail while the German authorities continue extradition proceedings against her. Ms McAliskey, 25, gave birth to a baby daughter, Loinnir - meaning ray of sunshine through dark clouds - at the Whittington Hospital, north London, on Monday. She is wanted by Germany over the IRA mortar-bomb attack on a British army base at Osnabrück last summer. **Patricia Wynn Davies**

Picture clues to shipwreck mystery

Experts are studying thousands of underwater pictures to try to solve a 17-year-old mystery surrounding the largest British merchant ship ever lost at sea. The images of the 169,000-ton bulk carrier MV *Derbyshire* were taken during a United Kingdom Government-EC sponsored expedition to the site of the wreck in the Pacific this spring. The Teeside-built *Derbyshire* went down in a typhoon off Japan in 1980 with the loss of its 44-strong British crew. An official inquiry into the disaster in 1987 said the weather was probably to blame. But families of the crew, trade unions and shipping experts have long argued that the disaster was caused by structural defects in the vessel.

people



Paula Jones: Allegations are easily understood and not implausible (Photograph: AFP)

Paula Jones given clearance for lawsuit against Clinton

In a judgment that was said by legal experts to put Bill Clinton's presidency seriously at risk for the first time, the US Supreme Court ruled yesterday that the President cannot postpone a sexual harassment suit brought against him just because he is president. The ruling means that Paula Jones, a former employee of Mr Clinton's home state of Arkansas, may pursue her lawsuit against him for damages. Ms Jones claims that during a conference in May 1991, Mr Clinton - then governor of Arkansas - called her to a hotel room, made sexual advances, and invited her to perform oral sex. When she refused, saying that she was "not that kind of girl", she says Mr Clinton told her: "You are smart. Let's keep this between ourselves."

The case has long been thought to be the most potentially damaging of the many scandals and alleged sexual encounters in which Mr Clinton and his wife, Hillary, are embroiled. The rights and wrongs of the Whitewater land deal are so complicated that they have failed to catch the public imagination, while the allegations of illegal funding of the Democratic Party have failed to implicate the Clintons directly. Ms Jones's allegations are, in contrast, easily understood and not implausible. The only part of yesterday's judgment that could be used to defer a lawsuit was the view from Justice John Paul Stevens that a delay might be justified "by considerations that do not require the recognition of any constitutional immunity. The high respect that is owed to the office of the chief executive, though not justifying a rule of categorical immunity, is a matter that should inform the conduct of the entire proceeding."

New baby for the Mother of Parliaments

The Labour media machine might be taking a breather after its election push but it was back on prolific form yesterday when it seized on a photo opportunity with one of its new MPs. A press release headlined "New Labour, New Baby" announced the news that Ruth Kelly, MP for Bolton West, had given birth to a son, just a month after winning her seat. Ms Kelly had the baby on Monday night at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel. The Health Minister Tessa Jowell was first to send a congratulatory note to her on "another New Labour gain" and said the birth gave a bold and positive message to Britain's women. "Ruth will be a great inspiration to other young mothers and I am sure that she will remember that it is only to our children that we are irreplaceable."



Labour's latest recruit weighed in at 7lbs 11ozs and a spokesman for the Royal London said both mother and baby (above) were doing well. Ms Kelly and her husband Derek have named their first child Eamonn Frederick Gadd. Ms Kelly is not the first woman to give birth while an MP. Among others is the former nationalist MP Bernadette Devlin, whose daughter Roisin McAliskey - on remand in connection with an IRA attack on a British barracks in Osnabrück, Germany, last summer - herself gave birth on Monday. Ms Kelly is known as a high-flier, having previously worked at the Bank of England and the Guardian newspaper. **Matthew Brace**

Polar women on top of the world

The first all-female expedition to reach the North Pole celebrated with champagne last night at the end of a 1,000-kilometre marathon across shifting sea ice. The four-member British team, the last of five who have taken part in the relay expedition, planted their flag at 4.45am after completing their 230-km leg in 10 days. Spokeswoman Mary Nicholson said: "They are just jubilant. I think they ran the last stretch."

briefing

Ulster policing under fire from human rights group

An end to the emergency regime in Northern Ireland is called for today by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, the international human rights group, in a detailed report. The report highlights four areas of policing that raise "urgent human rights concerns" - the wide powers enjoyed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the policing of last summer's marching season, the dramatic rise in paramilitary punishment assaults and persistent allegations of collusion between members of the security forces and loyalist paramilitary groups. The report says that police concentration on the suppression of political violence has led to the exclusion of traditional police functions in some areas, leading paramilitary organisations to assume a quasi-policing role. To *Serve Without Favor, Policing, Human Rights and Accountability*, available from Publications Department, Human Rights Watch, 485 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017; \$22.50. **Patricia Wynn Davies**

SOCIETY

Changing face of Britain

Changes in British society are making people less trusting, putting more pressure on their time and generally making life more difficult according to a major new study. But while we are concerned about the changes in society we are also willing to embrace even bigger changes, such as the provision of public services by private companies, if it means a return to traditional community values. A total of 81 per cent of Britons believe a job for life is a thing of the past, while 58 per cent believe life is more difficult now than in the past, according to research by the University of Leeds for the Independent Television Commission and advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather. "There is a widespread perception that times are changing faster and faster," said Sheila Byfield, business development director of Ogilvy & Mather. "And at the same time that life is uncertain and pressured."

MOTORING

Boy racers lose in sex stakes

Men driving quickly are a turn off for the opposite sex, but move to see women driving sports cars, according to a new survey. A female sports car driver makes one in two men melt and s. vehicles make an older woman more attractive, the survey by retailers Cowie found. Despite the fact that Porsche was voted the sexiest car, fewer than one in ten women agreed that an older man could reclaim his appeal via that route. The least sexy car was the Lada followed by the Robin Reliant. "Our research showed that most women would rather invest in new designer clothes or cosmetic surgery and few are aware that for them, a sports car could be the ultimate fashion accessory," said Cowie's Julie Jobling.

HEALTH CARE

Old people suffering maltreatment

Elderly people living in residential homes are being strapped into their chairs, force-fed and roughly handled according to a survey published today. The darker side of residential care is revealed in the survey by the Alzheimer's Disease Society which found one in ten carers said their relatives had been mistreated or neglected and more than half said they were not consulted about the use of drugs to control the old person's dementia. The report, based on almost 1,500 replies to a questionnaire, found most homes provided high-quality care which drew praise and gratitude from carers. But more than 150 examples of abusive treatment were described, most involving neglect or inappropriate treatment. Harry Cayton, chief executive of the society, said the cases of ill treatment were a matter of grave concern and called for tougher inspections and new guidance on the use of drugs in homes. **Jeremy Laurence**

CULTURE

Poetry puts listeners in bloom

William Wordsworth's *Daffodils* beat Rudyard Kipling's *If* by just four votes in a listeners' poll to find the nation's favourite poem. Classic FM said yesterday. The 650 poems nominated by listeners to Mike Read's Breakfast Show ran the gamut from high art to low brow. John Betjeman was the most nominated poet, with 31 nominations, ahead of Kipling (27), Shakespeare and Tennyson (both 23). The top 10 was as follows - 1: *Daffodils*, Wordsworth; 2: *If*, Kipling; 3: *The Listeners*, Walter De La Mare; 4: *Home Thoughts From Abroad*, Robert Browning; 5: *The Lady Of Shalott*, Tennyson; 6: *Cargoes*, John Masfield; 7: *Ode To Autumn*, John Keats; 8: *The Soldier*, Rupert Brooke; 9: *Sea Fever*, John Masfield; *Remember Me*, Christina Rossetti.

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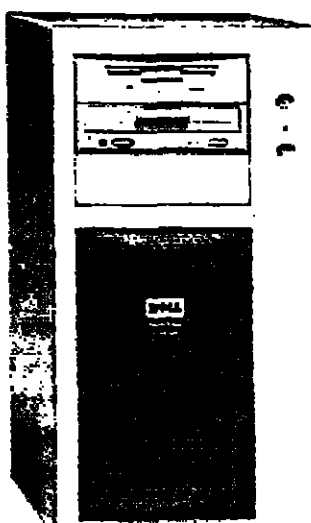
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Stephen and Russell are gay, disabled and want a baby. Do they have a right to ask a surrogate to bear their child?



Seeking family ties: Russell Conlon and his partner Stephen, who want to father a child of their own

Photograph: Martin Rickett/Newstream

Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

A gay male couple, both of whom are disabled, declared their determination to have a child of their own yesterday despite opposition from doctors, social workers and health managers.

Russell Conlon, 39, and his partner Stephen, 32, are seeking a lesbian couple prepared to enter a surrogacy arrangement to provide them with a baby, after being turned down as foster carers by their local social services department. In return they say they would provide the sperm for the lesbian couple to have a baby of their own.

The case triggered calls from Conservative family campaigners for the law on surrogacy to be tightened and from doctors who said clarification was needed of what kinds of in-

fertility treatment the National Health Service should fund.

Ministers are reviewing surrogacy arrangements after a case involving a Dutch couple went wrong when the English surrogate mother they had paid £13,000 to carry the baby chose to keep it.

The latest case will increase pressure for changes to be made, but ministers are understood to be reluctant to venture into an area regarded as an ethical minefield.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority said the level of expenses paid to surrogate mothers required examination, but the law was otherwise working well.

Mr Conlon, who "married" his gay partner last year in a ceremony blessed by a priest after an on/off relationship lasting 10 years, told *The Independent* yesterday of his lifelong

desire for a child. "It would be worth more to me than winning £10m on the lottery. We can give a child as much love, care, understanding and discipline as any heterosexual couple can," he said. "We are married in the eyes of God, we have a marriage certificate, we wear rings and our marriage was blessed by the church. Whether you are single, married, disabled, straight or gay you still have the right to try for a child."

They have been answering advertisements in the gay press from lesbian couples seeking gay males and offering "mutually beneficial arrangements" - the code for sperm donation. However, they are both living on state benefits and admitted that they could not afford to pay thousands of pounds in expenses.

Earlier, speaking on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, Mr Conlon said

that he and his partner had had no luck so far but remained hopeful.

"If we could share a baby with a lesbian couple that could be just as good. They could have it three or four nights a week and we could have it two or three nights. Then we would go through the midnight feeds and changing nappies that are part of what having a baby is about," he said.

The couple, from north Manchester, applied to the Manchester social services department to adopt or foster a child, but were turned down on the grounds of their disability. Mr Conlon suffers from an inherited brittle bone disease and Stephen, who did not wish to give his second name, has epilepsy following a car accident two years ago.

They are now applying to the London-based charity, Parents for Children, which specialises in

placing older children with disabilities.

Medical organisations called for guidance through the moral maze raised by such cases. Although medical treatment might not be necessary - lesbian couples can artificially inseminate themselves - if it were helping a gay couple have a child might not be construed as health care because they were incapable of conceiving under normal circumstances.

Valerie Riches, director of Family and Youth Concern, said the surrogacy law needed tightening to exclude gay couples. "The situation has got completely out of hand. They don't seem to be thinking of the rights of the child to be born to a man and a woman so he or she has got a solid base to start from," she said.

Health department officials are

known to believe that the only way of strengthening the law would be to follow the United States route of legally binding contracts, backed by elaborate systems of counselling and consent, which impose a legal duty on the surrogate mother to give up the child following delivery.

This runs counter to United Kingdom law, which is founded on the principle of a woman's right to choose and accounts for ministers' reluctance to tinker with it.

A spokesman for the Department of Health denied yesterday that any major overhaul of the surrogacy law was planned. "A lot of people know that ministers have promised to look at the existing law to see if it needs change and are thrusting their agendas on them," he said.

Leading article, page 17
Paul Valley, page 19

Epistles at dawn: St Paul takes the pulpit test

Clare Garner

It was the hottest literary ticket in town. Five hundred people were expected to turn out last night to witness two authors take each other to task over whether Jesus or Saint Paul was the founder of Christianity.

AN Wilson, the writer and journalist, and the Very Rev Tom Wright, Dean of Lichfield and mainstream academic theologian, were coming face to face for the first time to air their polar positions on Paul.

The hour-long confrontation over the historic foundations of the Church, billed as the "Epistles at Dawn" debate, at St James's Church in Piccadilly, was a long time coming, according to Dr Wright, a former tutor in New Testament Studies at Oxford, Cambridge and McGill Universities. "I have been looking forward to meeting and debating these issues with Andrew Wilson for five years," he said.

But Mr Wilson, whose previous book, *Jesus*, caused a sensation when it was published in 1992, denied he had earlier refused to rise to Dr Wright's challenge. "I've only been waiting for four weeks," he said. "I hadn't realised it was a long-expected event - like the coming of the Messiah."

The theological gauntlet had been laid down by Mr Wilson, once a prospective Anglican ordinand. To him, Jesus is simply a minor "Galilean exorcist", an unimportant Jew whose family did not believe he was divine.

In his book, *Paul: The Mind of the Apostle*, published earlier this year, he argues it was Paul, not Jesus, who inspired the movement which became Christianity. He describes Paul as a visionary who transformed Jesus into a mythological hero.

He has accused Dr Wright of "absurd literalism". The problem, he feels, is that "Christian fundamentalists like Paul Johnson or the Dean of Lichfield simply dare not face up to the fact that the childish stories they were told in their Sunday schools are unbelievable to the majority of people."

Dr Wright seized the theological high ground. Popular and radical new interpretations of the work of Paul, such as Mr Wilson's, do not have the scholarship to be historically credible, he insisted. While Paul made Christianity accessible to those beyond its original Jewish context, he did not "re-invent" Jesus in the process.

In his book, he accuses Mr Wilson of "wandering in the foggy foothills of the discussion, while far above them, clear and striking, stand the peaks and glaciers, the cliffs and ledges, which constitute the real high ground of Pauline thought."

Mr Wilson said: "I don't think you have to spend 25 years reading St Paul's epistles. You can read them in a day."

Father gives up fight to halt abortion

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

Pro-choice campaigners pledged to lobby for abortion on demand yesterday after a father abandoned his uphill fight to prevent his wife from aborting their unborn child.

James Kelly, 28, of Edinburgh, said that he had dropped plans to petition the House of Lords to appeal against Saturday's decision by three Scottish appeal judges because everything had "gone crazy" and he had lost his job and home.

But his attempt to stop his estranged wife, Lynn, 21, having a termination after the acrimonious break-up of their marriage still produced angry reactions from pro-choice activists who condemned the delay and distress she had suffered.

The Abortion Law Reform Association was yesterday contacting MPs who have drawn plans in the Private Members' Bill ballot to urge them to introduce legislation giving statutory status to abortion on request. Only the top six in the ballot have any chance of their measures becoming law, but the pro-choice Conservative MP

for Billericay, Teresa Gorman, is third.

Mrs Kelly, by now 14 weeks pregnant, had said over the weekend that she might now have the child rather than endure the trauma of an induced labour, prompting an increasingly pressurised Mr Kelly to suggest that she ought to have the abortion after all rather than having an "unloved" child.

John Crabbe, of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children in Scotland, appealed to Mrs Kelly yesterday to continue with the pregnancy. After Mr Kelly's plans to petition the law lords next Monday were formally abandoned at the Court of Session in Edinburgh yesterday afternoon, Mrs Kelly's solicitor, Beverley Johnson, said: "She is now able to make a choice whether or not she is able to proceed with the pregnancy."

Despite a protracted legal battle involving five separate hearings which delayed Mrs Kelly's originally planned termination by 11 days, Mr Kelly's chances of success were always slender. When an Oxford student tried to force his girlfriend to have a baby in 1987, the law lords lost no time in rejecting his petition to

appeal a ruling by the English Court of Appeal, giving the clearest indication that there was no point of law worth arguing.

Uncertainties remain, however. Despite ruling that Scottish law - like English law - gave the foetus no right to continue to exist in the mother's womb, the Court of Session judges still continued an injunction barring Mrs Kelly from abortion pending a further hearing on the progress of the petition to the Lords.

Last summer, the pro-life Society for the Protection of Unborn Children obtained a

temporary High Court injunction to stop a woman aborting a twin, although the abortion had already taken place so the legal action came too late.

Jane Roe, the campaign director of the Abortion Law Reform Association, said yesterday: "We are very concerned that cases like this could keep being brought by vindictive partners to harass and delay women."

"To prevent a similar legal challenge the law should be changed to bring it in line with reality - that the only practical, acceptable option is to give women the right to choose."



Lynn Kelly: Free to decide

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Spielberg creates his biggest monster to date


David Ussher
New York

Steven Spielberg's new movie, "Jaws," is the most successful film in the history of the motion picture industry. It has grossed over \$200 million in the United States and is the highest-grossing film in the history of the industry. The movie, which stars Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw, and Bruce Campbell, is a thriller about a shark that attacks people on a beach. The movie is a classic example of Spielberg's talent for creating suspense and excitement. It is a must-see for anyone who loves a good thriller.

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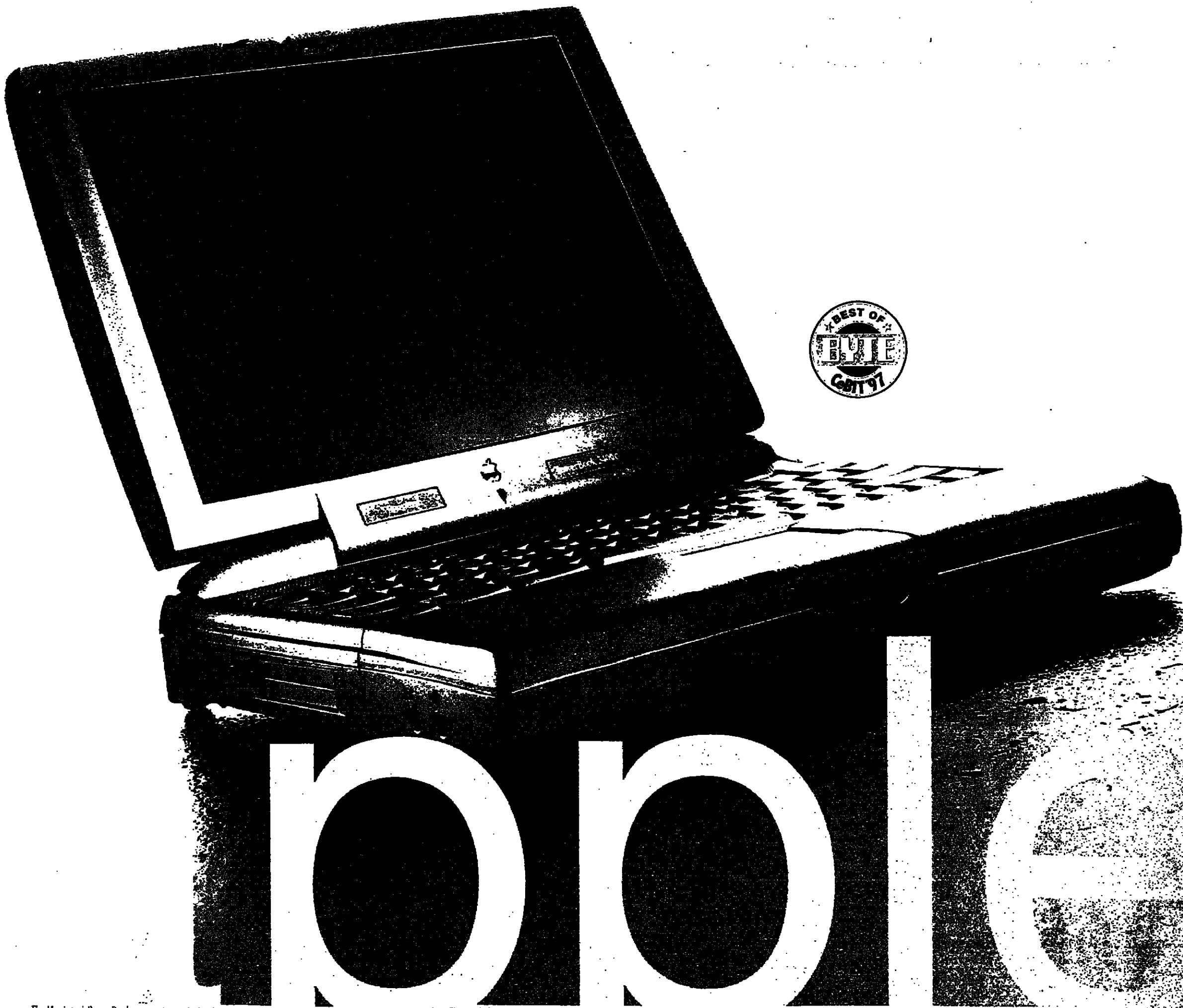
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Final touch: Royal Academy Staff hanging some of the paintings, which along with prints and sculptures make up the 1,201 works featuring in this year's Summer Exhibition Photograph: Tom Pliston

Kitaj causes £1m stir at Royal Academy show

Louis Jury

Brilliant splashes of colour and exquisitely executed black and white prints jostled side by side as the critics got the first glimpse of the 229th Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy in London, yesterday.

But members of the public have to wait until Sunday before they will be able to see the 1,201 works on display. More than 120,000 people are expected to visit over the next 11 weeks to compare the paintings, prints and sculptures of professional artists with the work of Britain's keen amateurs.

The American artist RB Kitaj once more succeeds in seizing the limelight with a £1m price tag on his work *Sandra Three*, the follow-up to last year's scathing attack on the critics he blames for contributing to the death of his wife, Sandra Fisher, who was also an artist.

At the opposite end of the price range, Juliet Blaxland is offering an unlimited edition of three works entitled *Life in a Listed Building* for £10 a piece. Last year, more than 2,900 works were sold at an average price of £428, making a total of £1.2m.

Highlights of the exhibition, which is sponsored by Guinness, include a work by Jasper Johns, an honorary member of the academy, and a portrait of Stephen Fry, the actor, by Maggie Hambling.

Works by Frank Auerbach, Lucien Freud and Richard Hamilton all appear in the exhibition for the first time, at Kitaj's request. They hang alongside his work, Kitaj describes them as the "Over-The-Hill-Gang" whom he had asked to join him in the show "because I believe in a Geriatric Avant-Garde".

But there are also miniatures of the entertainer Rolf Harris and the actress Dame Judi Dench as well as the usual range of landscapes, still lifes and nudes.

Chris Orr, the Royal Academician and printmaker who curated the print gallery, said he had endeavoured to give the exhibition a coherence. But he was "pretty catholic" in his tastes and had made sure he had chosen a variety of styles and not only those like his own "funny narrative" prints.

"We had an awful lot of sheep entries this year. It was definitely year of the sheep," he said. Not all were chosen, he said, but his own work inspired by Dolly, the cloned Scottish sheep, is among them. It is called *The Matriarchs Have Landed*.

Twenty-five sculptures in the exhibition have been captioned with braille for the visually impaired and can be touched by them. Gioya Steinke, 77, who is registered blind, said this service was "terribly important". "I came the one year when you couldn't touch and ached to. All they ask is that you don't wear rings."

From the end of June, visitors can also see the Final Year Show of 19 Royal Academy students. There are also two new departures this year. On Sundays in July the academy will stay open until 8.30pm. And all children under eight who visit during Gallery Week, from 19 to 27 July, will receive colouring pads and crayons.

Class-size cut may reduce choice

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

Parental choice of primary schools will "go out of the window" under government plans to limit infant class sizes to a maximum of 30, a head teachers' leader warned yesterday.

David Hart, General Secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said the restriction would inevitably mean fewer parents securing their first preference school since popular schools would be able to turn away children after filling all their places.

Enforcing the planned limit, to be included in a White Paper due next month, would require fundamental

changes to the appeal system available to parents denied a place for their child at the school of their choice, Mr Hart said on the opening day of the Association's annual conference in Scarborough.

If the maximum was to be enforced, appeals panels - which currently grant the majority of appeals which proceed as far as a full hearing - would have to give up the power to force the school to take a pupil where the admission would push the size of a class above 30, he said. Parents would then be obliged to turn to a less heavily subscribed school in search of a place.

The move to cut class sizes for five to seven-year-olds to no more than

30 by 2000 was a key Labour manifesto pledge. At present, some 440,000 children in the age group are educated in classes above that number. The government proposes to reduce class sizes using £140m saved by abolishing the assisted places scheme, which funds places in private schools for children from poor backgrounds.

At present, Mr Hart said, admissions appeals panels were "prone to accept parental preference" unless a school could come up with a strong reason why a child could not be admitted. Class sizes were not considered a strong reason for refusal.

To keep class-size targets, the panels would have to make class sizes

their key criterion, even though the move would undermine parental choice. Mr Hart added: "You can't have a policy of maximum class sizes of up to 30 and at the same time say there must be free and full parental choice. You can't have the two together - something has to go."

However, although he challenged the government to explain how it would change admissions procedures to ensure class sizes were met, he insisted the policy could work. One option open to ministers is the imposition of a legal limit on class sizes.

The NAHT believes imposing a statutory maximum might leave heads with practical difficulties as they faced pressure from parents and

governors. The Association would prefer stronger appeals panels and "more coherent" planning by local education authorities to ensure funds are used to keep class sizes down.

Senior government sources yesterday acknowledged that the operation of appeals panels would be examined as class-size reduction was phased in. The four-year phasing period would allow time to iron out any difficulties, the source said.

Schools Standards Minister Stephen Byers said the government was aware of "potential difficulties" surrounding implication for parental choice. He said: "This is an issue that we will be addressing in the White Paper we will be publishing in

June. We are confident we can reconcile our pledge to reduce class sizes with the need to allow parents to exercise a preference about the school their children should attend."

Headteachers yesterday called on the Government to clear the way for substantial pay rises for heads and deputies to stem a growing tide of early departures from the profession.

Unveiling new figures showing a rise of over 90 per cent in the number of heads retiring early this school year compared with last, the National Association of Head Teachers said salary increases would be crucial in reversing the trend and in ensuring new recruits were found to fill growing numbers of vacancies.

Noose threat halts eviction Shake-up for NHS computers

Michael Streeter

Officials trying to evict victim protesters from the site of the planned Manchester second runway were delayed yesterday by a woman demonstrator with a makeshift noose around her neck.

The woman, called Liz, has attached a rope around her to the entrance door of the main tunnel at the protesters' Sir Cliff Richard OBE Vegan Revolution Camp.

If the door is opened she would be hanged, and a notice and diagram has been left outside which clearly describes her position. Bailiffs were trying to find a way of removing the woman without harming her.

The Under Sheriff of Cheshire, Randal Hibbert, who is heading the operation to evict people from the site in Bollin Valley, south of Manchester, said: "We are thinking of ways and means to get her out."

He said the woman was inside the cliff-face tunnel head-first and it could take two days to remove her. Three male protesters are also in the tunnel, one of six which bailiffs have yet to clear after removing people from the Zion Tree and Wild Garlic camps at the weekend.

One protester, Jeff Gazzard, said there were still around 80 protesters on the heavily-wooded area after a number of arrests yesterday. He estimated that it could take officials up

to two more weeks to clear the site.

After a meeting with the bailiffs, he urged them to continue to allow the demonstrators a full supply of fresh air in the tunnels and let them give themselves up "voluntarily" when food and water supplies ran out. He said their role was to hinder the eviction for as long as possible, but denied suggestions that gas cylinders had been put in place to harm officials: "There is nothing down there which could be described as a booby trap." Mr Hibbert said they had found a butane cylinder at the entrance to one tunnel.

The eviction process from the proposed £172m second runway began at 4am on Tuesday last week.

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

The trouble-strewn record of computing in the National Health Service will come under a far-reaching review next month, led by Frank Burns, chief executive of the Wirral Hospitals Trust in Cheshire.

Mr Burns, whose one-year secondment to the NHS Executive was announced yesterday, accepted that there have been several well-publicised computing failures in the NHS in recent years. But he is convinced that locally-based computer systems - introduced with the enthusiastic understanding of health care professionals - is the way forward.

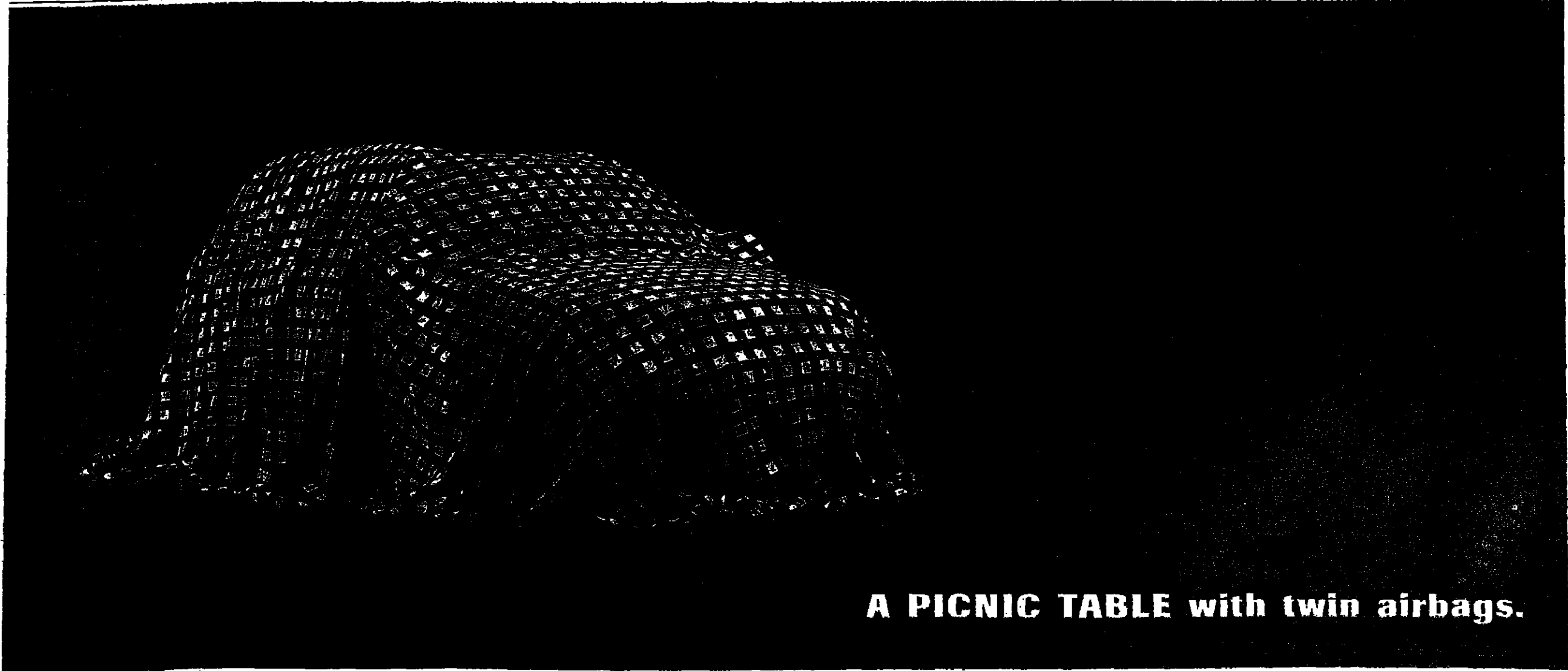
"As far as clinical records go, most hospitals are still coping with paper-based systems. And the traffic of patient information between GPs and hospitals, thousands every day, is mostly by bits of paper carried by people in trucks," he said, and suggested that it would be better if those bits of information were carried invisibly over phone lines.

His concern will be to shift the focus away from over-arching nationally integrated systems - such as the £100m Hospitals Information Support System (HISS), begun in 1988 - and towards systems designed for the local hospital level. "I would be disappointed if I can't make the rest of the NHS move towards this mod-

el," he commented, though he would not suggest a target date for making NHS records entirely electronic.

After 30 years with the NHS, Mr Burns, 46, begins his new job in June, taking over as head of the NHS's Information Management Group.

As chief executive at the Wirral Trust, Mr Burns has overseen the launch in 1990 of an Electronic Patient Record system, which puts clinical records and data on to a single database within a hospital. It cost £14m and is used by 3,000 staff, who have dealt with 80,000 in-patients, 250,000 outpatients, 90,000 accident and emergency cases and 250,000 therapeutic visits to clinics. The EPR system has been judged a success.



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Michael Horton

After coming in second in the 1997 British Grand Prix, Michael Schumacher has become the most successful driver in the history of Formula 1. The 32-year-old German has won 21 races and 71 poles. He is the first driver to win the World Championship in three consecutive years. His success has made him a global icon and a major force in the sport. In 1998, he won the championship again, and in 1999, he won it for a third time. His dominance has led to a new era of competitiveness in the sport, with other drivers like David Coulthard and Eddie Irvine also achieving success. Schumacher's career has been marked by controversy, including a ban from the sport for a year in 1997 for a collision with a marshal. Despite this, he remains one of the most respected and successful drivers in the history of the sport.

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Kick in the teeth for the sport no one wants to regulate

Michael Hanlon

Bitter recriminations have broken out among the governing bodies of the sport of kickboxing following the death of a fighter at the weekend.

The organisations that represent Britain's estimated 15,000 kickboxers blame each other for a lack of regulation and for the power struggles and in-fighting that have led to the sport losing official recognition.

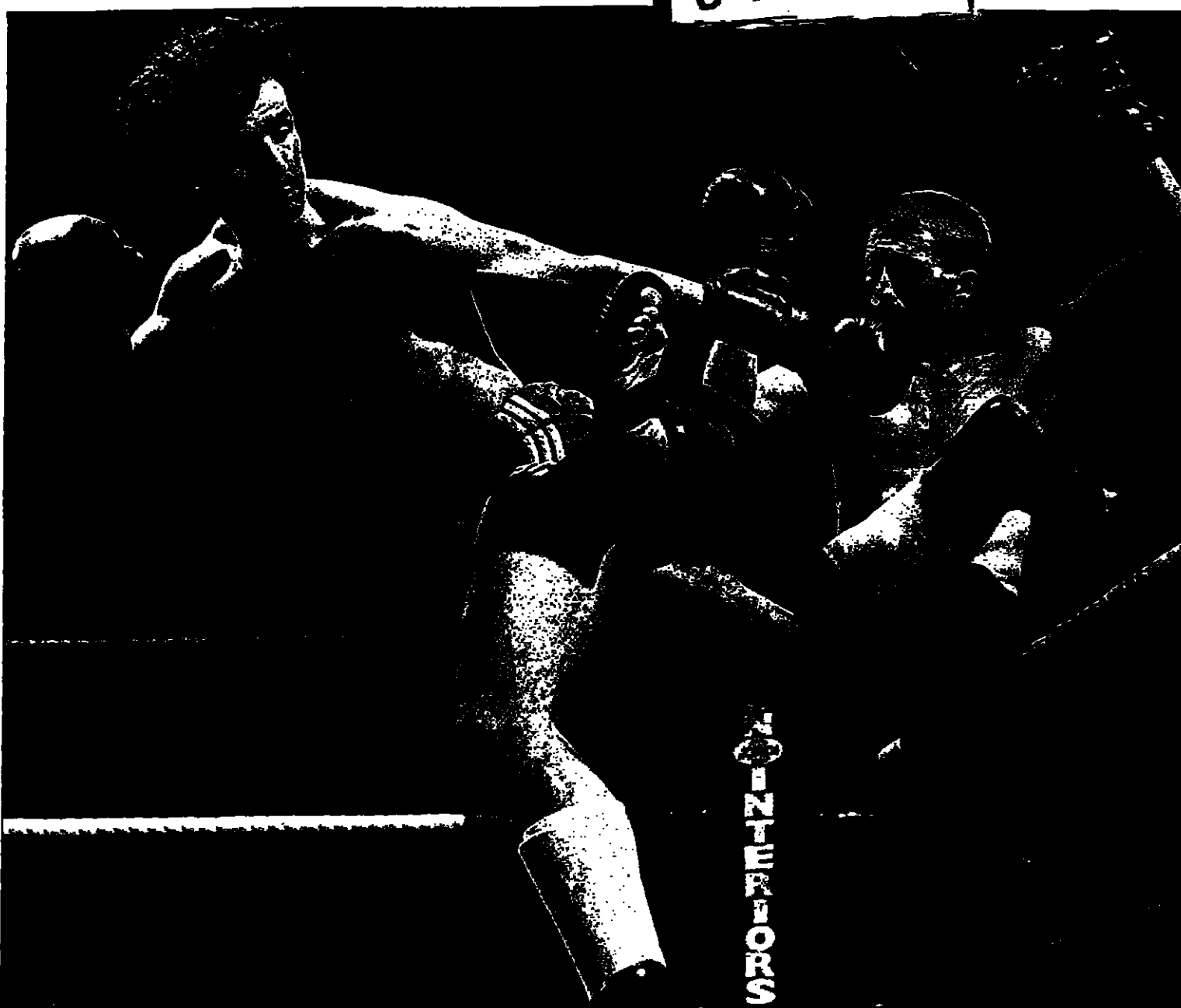
For its part, the English Sports Council, the largest of the four bodies that regulate British sport, said that concerns over the safety of kickboxing together with a "marked lack of unity" within the sport's governing bodies had led to the martial art losing its recognition by the council in 1990.

The body which originally sanctioned the fatal fight in Ulster claimed yesterday that it had withdrawn its accreditation after discovering that no doctor was in attendance.

Sean McBride, an 18-year-old amateur from Dungannon, Co Tyrone, died hours after winning his Ulster Welterweight title bout at the Glengannon Hotel outside Dungannon on Sunday. He collapsed in the ring after the contest and was taken away on a stretcher but died in hospital without regaining consciousness. He had not been wearing head protection during the contest and received a blow to the back of the head.

After the fight, Billy Murray, the International Sports Kickboxing Association (ISKA) champion, who is also from Northern Ireland, accused the four UK sports councils of failing to regulate kickboxing and allowing fights to take place without proper medical supervision and regulation.

Mr Murray attacked the World Kickboxing Organisation (WKO) for giving the fight its accreditation and targeted the Sports Council for failing to regulate the sport. "The Sports Council is to blame for this. We have been calling for this [regulation] for many years and they have been sitting on their



Power play: Billy Murray, Ireland's former kickboxing champion, in action. Murray has accused four UK sports bodies of failing to regulate the sport properly following the death on Sunday of Ulster Welterweight champion Sean McBride (below, right) Photograph: Pacemaker Belfast

backsides doing nothing. I don't think they understand the sport. I don't think they know how to categorise it - they are saying: 'is it kung-fu? Is it karate?'

"I would question the validity of the WKO... the WKO is at fault and this fight should have never taken place without a doctor."

Mr Murray denied that the sport was unsafe. "Sure, you get a few cuts and bumps, like in any contact sport. But there have never been any serious injuries before," he said.

A spokeswoman for the English Sports Council denied that the body had not done enough to regulate kickboxing. "The history of the martial arts in the UK, and internationally, reveals a marked lack of unity within many of the sports, with a multitude of self-appointed governing

bodies... and a range of breakaway associations involved in continual disagreements," she said. "In addition to the multiplicity of organisations, the council had and has concerns about the rules governing safety in the activity. An inspection did nothing to reduce the council's concerns about standards of safety within the sport."

Yesterday, Phil Mayo, of the WKO, based in London, said that his organisation had removed its accreditation from the fight. "Initially the promoter applied for the sanction to be organised, which was given by us provided he abided by the rules, but when we got there we found there was no doctor in attendance, and that was completely outside our rules and we withdrew our sanction," he said.

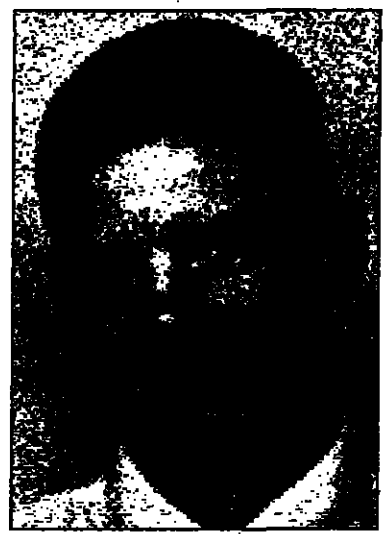
Mr Mayo dismissed Mr Murray's claims: "The ISKA is a basically

American body, it is absolutely minuscule in the UK. I believe that there is just this one man in Belfast who represents them," he said.

A third body, the World Kickboxing Association (WKA), based in Birmingham, claimed that it was the true governing body of the sport.

Paul Ingram, World President of the WKA, said that it was the oldest kickboxing organisation in the world and that the WKO was only a small body. "The ISKA - which by the way stands for the International Sports and Karate Organisation, whatever Billy Murray said it stands for - is more of a promotional body than a sanctioning association."

"At our fights there always have to be paramedics and at least one doctor. The fighters themselves are licensed and insured."



Hunt for source of hospital food bug

Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

Public health officials were urgently trying to locate the source of an outbreak of the food-poisoning bug *E. coli* yesterday which has infected 21 staff and patients in a Scottish hospital.

The outbreak, one of the largest this year, was identified at the Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary, the hospital which treated victims of last year's epidemic in which 19 people died. It will renew concern about Scotland's high rate of infection with *E. coli*, one of the nastiest food-poisoning bacteria, which remains unexplained.

Health officials said six of the 21 in the latest outbreak were ill with symptoms such as diarrhoea and the rest had been identified as carriers of the bacterium in tests but remained well. Thirteen of those infected were patients, seven were nurses and one was a domestic worker.

Central Scotland NHS Trust, which runs the unit, said doctors and nurses were taking all necessary action to contain the infection and prevent its spread.

Dr Derek Sinclair, medical director for the trust, said: "We have taken all necessary measures to give care to those affected in this outbreak. We are trying to establish the source and samples have been taken from a wide range of people and places. We have no idea of the source at this stage and we are examining all options."

The outbreak occurred in three continuing care wards at the hospital which has about 70 elderly men and women patients, ranging in age from 70 to 90, and more than 100 staff, all of whom will be tested for the infection.

Dr Sinclair confirmed the

hospital kitchens have been screened, but said: "We didn't check with a microscope, that's why everything has now been sent for analysis."

Last year's outbreak infected 496 people over five weeks in November, of whom 272 were confirmed in laboratory tests. The outbreak was linked with cooked meat and pies supplied by John M Barr and Son, a butcher in Wishaw, which supplied more than 60 outlets in Lanarkshire and the Forth Valley.

Until last year, previous annual totals of cases of *E. coli* had ranged from 200 to 250 but Scotland's rate of infection is now running at three to four times the English level, per head of population. Officials privately believe Scottish methods of collecting data are more accurate and there is greater awareness of the problem north of the border but that this is unlikely to account for the whole of the difference.

Dr John Cowden, consultant epidemiologist at the Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health, said responsibility for preventing outbreaks lay with kitchen staff who prepared food. The *E. coli* bug only contaminates the surface of the meat, through contact with cattle faeces, and is destroyed in cooking. Cooked meat can become contaminated, however, through contact with infected raw meat and must be kept separate from it at all times.

Dr Cowden said: "Present controls at the farm and the slaughterhouse are insufficient to guarantee food free of bacteria. Therefore the final responsibility lies with the person preparing the food. This is a heat-sensitive bacterium. If you cook the food properly and ensure it is not cross contaminated subsequently, it is safe."

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international

Chirac begs voters to save his presidency

President Jacques Chirac last night appealed to the French people to rescue one of the longest, most distinguished and most perplexing careers in post-war French politics. His own.

Although theoretically Mr Chirac is not involved in the campaign, the voters' stunning repudiation of the centre-right governing coalition in the first round of parliamentary elections last Sunday threatens him with five years of lame-duck presidency.

The President's subsequent firing, in effect, of his prime minister and long-time acolyte, Alain Juppé, puts him, more than ever, in the firing line. With no one else to blame a defeat in the second round on Sunday will be primarily a humiliation for Mr Chirac.

In a televised address to the nation last night, Mr Chirac appealed to French voters to spare France, the European Union — and himself — a long period of left-right power-sharing or "cohabitation".

The decision of the unpopular Mr Juppé to stand down, whatever the result this weekend, is supposed to bring out the tens of thousands of centre-right voters who stayed at home the first time around. The Elysée Palace said Mr Juppé's mid-election vanishing act — something unprecedented in French politics — would avoid "an excessive concentration on his personality" in the run-up to the decisive ballot.

with the American spy agency, at least according to Wolf's memoirs, due out in 13 countries on 1 June.

He says he turned down the CIA offer, even though it would have put him out of the reach of German prosecutors.

Photograph: Reuters

French forced to vote in a power vacuum as the NF threatens to split right's vote, writes John Lichfield in Paris



Chirac: Fears 'cohabitation'

It also creates a situation which must be unusual in any democracy. French voters are being asked to vote in a political vacuum. They are being asked to return a government without knowing who the leader of that government will be and without being given any detail on how its policies might change.

The favourite among centre-right parliamentary candidates of the Gaullist RPR, and their partners in the UDF, would probably be Mr Séguin. He is seen as a man who could clarify the muddle in French politics by bringing government policy away from its market and EU-oriented reforms and back towards a dirigiste consensus. How this would square with France's commitments to prepare its economy for entry to the single currency is unclear.

Mr Balladur made his own pitch to regain the job in an interview with *Le Monde* yesterday in which he said the secret was not to follow the "Anglo-Saxon model" but to invent a liberalism "à la française".

Le Monde joined in the chorus of disapproval from the left of the manner and timing of Mr Juppé's departure. The newspaper praised the outgoing prime minister's determination in trying to push through popular reforms of the French welfare state. But it lashed Mr Chirac for cynically ditching him in adversity and said the President was now himself the object of a national "crisis of confidence". Left-wing politicians said the departure of Mr Juppé was a symptom of the "desperation" of the centre-right and created a constitutionally unfortunate precedent.

Will it succeed in saving the election for the centre-right? Possibly, but the arithmetic remains complex. Of the 555 constituencies in France proper, 400 are virtually certain to split evenly between the centre-right and the left. Of the others as many as 100 are too close to call.

Some 78 constituencies are three-way battles between the left, centre-right and far-right National Front. All but five of these were held by the outgoing government. The presence of an NF candidate, splitting the overall vote for the right, is expected to bring in a Socialist or Communist in at least 50 of these constituencies. The rest are too close to call.

The outcome on Sunday will depend on three variables: how many centre-right non-voters from last Sunday turn out to block the left; how many NF voters swing to the centre-right; and how many leftist non-voters, encouraged by the good showing of the Socialists, join the battle.

Diane Coyle, Business, page 18

Cold War spymaster stays out of jail

Düsseldorf (AP) — Markus Wolf, the legendary former East German spymaster, seen above leaving court with his wife Andrea, was convicted yesterday of four Cold War kidnappings and given a two-year suspended sentence.

The Düsseldorf State

Supreme Court verdict means that Wolf — who has never served a prison sentence since the collapse of East Germany despite two convictions — can be certain he never will.

It constitutes yet another victory for Wolf, who spent three Cold War decades out-

foxing Western intelligence agents while having his own agents steal vital Nato secrets.

Wolf's knowledge was considered so valuable that in 1990, when he was retired, a top official with the CIA offered him cash, a home in California and a new identity if he cooperated

with the American spy agency, at least according to Wolf's memoirs, due out in 13 countries on 1 June.

He says he turned down the CIA offer, even though it would have put him out of the reach of German prosecutors.

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Le Pen holds the key to victory for left

The National Front leader would like to humiliate President Jacques Chirac and mess around the European Union by assisting the left to win the second round of the French election on Sunday.

In theory, he has it in his power to do so. The election is balanced so finely that the Front's first-round voters hold the destiny of France, conceivably of Europe, in their hands.

Jean-Marie Le Pen could advise NF voters at a giant rally in the Paris suburbs tomorrow night to swing left where their own candidates have been eliminated. However, to do so would jeopardise the chances of a handful of NF candidates, including his own daughter, Marie-Caroline.

The Front scored its highest ever total — 15 per cent of the vote — last Sunday in the first round of a French parliamentary election. A record number of NF candidates, 133, including Marie-Caroline Le Pen, west of Paris, survived into the second round this weekend.

Mr Le Pen's instinct is to urge NF voters to vote for the left in the more than 400 constituencies in which their candidates have been eliminated. The normal pattern would be for 40 per

cent of FN voters to switch to the centre-right, 20 per cent to the left and 40 per cent not to vote at all.

If Mr Le Pen could disturb this pattern, he might tip the election towards Lionel Jospin, the Socialist leader, consigning President Chirac to five years of cohabitation with the left, humiliating the centre-right and creating more growing-room for the NF. A left victory would also throw into doubt the timetable for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), which Mr Le Pen opposes.

But the left is the main threat to the FN in the half-dozen or so constituencies where it has a chance of winning seats in the National Assembly. If Mr Le Pen is saying "Vote left", it becomes awkward for FN candidates in these seats to urge centre-right voters to vote for the Front to "Keep out the left".

The seats in question include Viroles-Marignane, near Marseille, where Bruno Mégret, the *de facto* number two of the FN, and Mr Le Pen's in-

subordinate rival, is in a neck-and-neck, second round run-off against the outgoing Socialist MP. To lose this race would cause little grief to Mr Le Pen. However, the FN also has

hopes of winning two seats in Toulon in straight run-offs with left-wing candidates. And then there is Marie-Caroline Le Pen. She topped the first round poll in Mantes-la-Jolie, in the suburban *département* of Yvelines, but the Socialist candidate, who came third, could win on Sunday if she inherits all the first-round Communist voters.

The FN leader made several speeches during the first-round campaign in which he said he would prefer the left to win the election. But he was disowned in an unprecedented public display of dissension, not only by Mr Mégret but by other, more loyal, FN leaders.

At a moment of triumph for the FN, Mr Le Pen's position within the party has been weakened by the rise of Mr Mégret and by his own decision not to run in any constituency (for fear of losing while Mr Mégret won).

Tomorrow night he will probably back his instinct and say "Vote tactically left", while trying to make exceptions of the seats the NF could win.

Conversations in the Le Pen household after Sunday will be interesting if the formidable Marie-Caroline loses to her Socialist rival by a couple of hundred votes.

TV sports star faces sex case

Mary Dejevsky Washington

The latest wave of American sexual prurience is threatening the reputations and careers of two of the country's longest-serving and best-known sports commentators.

Marv Albert, 53, who presents professional basketball for NBC and ice hockey for a local television station, was charged yesterday in Arlington, Virginia, with forcible sodomy and assault and battery on the basis of claims by a woman who herself faces a charge for threatening to kill a former boyfriend.

Mr Albert, who has denied all the charges, applied successfully for bail and a jury trial which is scheduled for on 22 September.

Meanwhile in New York, Frank Gifford, presenter of ABC television's Monday night American football programme for more than 20 years, has had video stills of a compromising hotel-room encounter splashed all over the *Globe*, a supermarket tabloid. Representatives of Mr Gifford, 66, whose 11-year marriage to television talk-show host, Kathie Lee Gifford, has been marketed as a model of family values, say that he is the victim of entrapment.

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international

Russia shakes mailed fist at Taliban danger

Moscow — While Boris Yeltsin was in Paris bowing to Nato pressure on his western front, the eyes of his Moscow policy-makers were trained nervously on Central Asia yesterday, and in particular on the dangers which Russia believes flow from the dramatic Taliban triumphs in northern Afghanistan.

The Russian foreign ministry was "gravely concerned" about the "potential threat" to the southern frontier of the former Soviet Union following the Taliban's seizure of northern Afghanistan, gains which give the Islamic fundamentalists a firmer grip on the country than any regime since the Soviets were driven out in 1989.

Officials from Russia and eight ex-Soviet republics met in Moscow to discuss moves towards implementing a collective security treaty, never before used, under which members of

Kremlin sounds alarm over security in Central Asia, writes Phil Reeves

pers: "Will there be war on the southern frontier of the CIS?" asked *Izvestia*. *Nevystranyye Gazeta* floated the widely-held view that the US is covertly supporting the Taliban in order to control oil and gas pipelines out of the region.

The events in Afghanistan were "primarily an internal affair", a foreign ministry spokesman said yesterday. He pointed out that the Taliban have yet to threaten CIS borders, but emphasised that the CIS collective security treaty would be activated if this happened. Disapproving growls have also come from Yevgeny Primakov, Russia's Foreign Minister, in recent days.

Despite this, speculation has begun in Moscow that the Kremlin may soon recognise the Taliban government, despite its fear of the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in the countries of Central Asia and Russia itself, whose population includes millions of Muslims.

Following the flight from Mazar-i-Sharif of General Rashid Dostum, leader of the opposition alliance, the Taliban now controls 90 per cent of the country, including all major towns and cities. "What else can be done?" asked Viktor Kremenyuk, an analyst with the Moscow-based US-Canada Trust. "To stick to a non-existent or ephemeral government, or to recognise the reality?"

Such a move would not remove the general panic over the advance of the Taliban into northern Afghanistan, territory which was viewed by Moscow and Afghanistan's neighbours as a critical buffer zone.

The Taliban has insisted it has no designs on territory outside Afghanistan but such claims have done little to allay fears that religious zealots are closing in on the Muslim nations of former-Soviet Central Asia, all of which have secular govern-

ments: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

According to the Russian news agency Interfax, Kyrgyzstan's security and interior ministers yesterday travelled south to the border, "to direct fortifications", while Uzbekistan is reported to have reinforced its borders with fresh trenches.

It has not escaped the notice of his detractors that the Taliban leader, Amir-ul Momaneen, is otherwise known as the King of the Faithful, a title that markedly fails to acknowledge the existence of national borders.



Road to victory: Taliban fighters gathering at a village near the recently captured northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif

Photograph: Reuters



the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) have pledged to defend one another against external aggressors.

When news of the Taliban advances spread at the weekend, Russia placed on alert its 25,000 troops along the border with Tajikistan, amid fears that the region could be destabilised by a flood of refugees.

Nearly six years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow thirsts for the influence that the Soviet Union wielded in Central Asia, not least because of the massive oil and gas reserves there. Its alarm was reflected in yesterday's newspa-

City defies order to surrender weapons

Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan (AP) — The thud of rockets reverberated throughout Mazar-i-Sharif yesterday as residents of this newly captured desert city defied orders from the Taliban religious army to disarm.

The fighting began in the Shia Muslim neighbourhood of Saadabad, where three Taliban soldiers were killed, and quickly spread throughout the city.

By dusk, a major battle was raging. Rockets slammed into buildings. People scrambled for cover as small-arms fire raged.

It was not clear who was fighting whom, or whether there had been a collapse in the uneasy alliance between the Taliban and its ethnic Uzbek allies who helped the Taliban seize the northern provinces over the

weekend. The capture of territory once held by warlord Rashid Dostum gave the Taliban control of nearly all of Afghanistan. There was no immediate information on casualties.

Tanks and huge trucks with multiple rocket launchers headed toward Saadabad. The roar of heavy machine-gun fire ripped through the night air. Residents bunkered down inside their homes and international aid groups asked their workers to stay indoors.

Earlier yesterday, brawls erupted as Taliban troops tried to disarm soldiers loyal to Malik Pahlawan, the Uzbek general who led a revolt last week that overthrew Dostum—who fled to Turkey. Residents opened fire, killing three Taliban soldiers.

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FLYING THE FLAG

Continuing a series on Britain's last colonies, David Usborne reports from Bermuda



Beat in the heat: Policemen on duty in Bermuda, where the population voted overwhelmingly in 1995 to retain British ties. Photograph: Suzanne Murphy/Rex

Hamilton — A grand afternoon indeed at the National Sports Club. The Band of the Bermuda Regiment has given us God Save the Queen and Bermuda is setting about Barbados in a Rugby World Cup qualifying match. In the VIP tent, Lord Waddington, the former Home Secretary, is enjoying one of his last public appearances as governor. His is a gin and tonic; most of us are taking bucks fizz.

Lord Waddington may be going — he departed formally at the end of April — but Bermuda is not. Once Hong Kong is finally relinquished on 30 June, these coral outcrops in the Atlantic with a population of 60,000 will become the largest remaining British dependency. If the sun set long ago over most of the Empire, here, at least, it remains resolutely above the horizon.

There is just a chance that Britain's oldest colony — the Bermuda Islands were settled after a British ship bound for Virginia under Sir George Somers struck rocks off its eastern end in 1609 — could become Britain's last.

That would be ironic. Nowhere else under British rule is more able to go it alone. It has one of the world's highest per capita incomes, levies no income tax, and is a magnet for tourists and international busi-

nesses, especially the insurance industry. It is also a fully-fledged, multi-party democracy. What Britain supplies is the Governor and his funny-plumed hat. (But Bermuda pays for his salary and costs). London looks after the islands' limited foreign policy and defence concerns. And, of course, it provides a certain quaintness that the mostly American tourists relish: red post boxes, warm Watneys and a branch of Marks & Spencer.

But, for now, it seems that most Bermudians, amongst whom the black-white ratio is roughly 60-40, prefer to remain under Albion's wing. In a referendum in 1995 the 53 per cent who voted rejected independence by 73 per cent. Even politicians who favour independence predict it may now be 20 years before Bermuda confronts the issue again.

"I don't see independence in Bermuda's foreseeable future," said Jennifer Smith, leader of the opposition Progressive Labour Party (PLP), which has the pursuit of independence enshrined in its constitution.

Pamela Gordon, recently installed Premier and leader of the United Bermuda Party (UBP) agreed: "It'll be a while. The referendum is still very fresh; it caused a lot of pain". The fallout from the 1995 vote continues to stir the calm waters of Bermudian politics. An early victim was Sir John

Swan, Bermuda's long-serving premier and UBP leader who called the referendum. Upon the results, he was forced to resign. Since then, he has been at the heart of a political soap opera that might be called Bignagade.

Picking himself up from his demise, Sir John asked for — and got — a licence to open a McDonald's on the island. It was a transaction that reeked of political favouritism; it also appalled most Bermudians.

The burger debate split the UBP and led to the demise of Sir John's successor, David Saul, two months ago. Now, Ms Gordon is striving to clear the wreckage before the next elections, which must be held by next autumn.

Such turmoil is not Bermuda's style. Indeed, it is the conservatism of Bermuda that partly explains the dearth of nationalist fervour. In so far as there is any, it exists in the black population and is driven by racial frictions. "Change is difficult for any society and it's no different here," said Premier Gordon. "We like the status quo and there is the feeling that if it isn't broke, don't try to fix it."

The importance of international business of political and economic stability, perceived to be partly derived from the British link, is lost on few Bermudians. Perhaps Bermuda's most noted corporate catch was Jardine Matheson which stunned the Hong Kong expatriate establishment in 1984 by announcing its intention to restructure itself under a holding company to be registered here.

"We needed to find somewhere secure with a legal environment that was familiar to us; therefore we picked Bermuda," explained Harry Wilken, head of Jardines here. "Bermuda is highly respected in the Far East as a place that is open, where there is not a whiff of corruption." As for the 1995 referendum, Jardines is just glad it's over.

Among the few speaking up for independence is Walton Brown, a market researcher who heads a group called the Committee for Independence for Bermuda. "The will of the people was not allowed to emanate — quite clearly they have not spoken," he said.

Mr Brown is guided by a feeling simply that "you should govern yourself". He also questions Britain's long-term commitment. "Its old colonies just cannot be of any interest to it in the long term and we have to be ready for that."

Ms Gordon sees behind Bermuda's attachment to Britain a certain sense of satisfaction that Bermuda did not join the many British colonies in the Caribbean when they rushed into independence in the early Sixties and discovered sovereignty was no Nirvana. "Our sisters to the south taught us how not to do it," she said.

Tomorrow: The Falklands

THE World of Lilly Wong

28 April 1997



HK dissidents find safe havens

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

Chinese dissidents who secured temporary refuge in Hong Kong appear to have found safe havens overseas despite dramatic threats of suicide and other forms of self-injury if they did not receive help from the colonial government.

Most of the 50 remaining dissidents who were in Hong Kong at the beginning of the year were smuggled out of China by the underground railway known as "Operation Yellowbird". It was established in Hong Kong

by supporters of China's democracy movement to help victims of the purge which followed the Tiananmen Square massacre.

It received an unprecedented level of assistance from the Hong Kong government in finding new homes in the West for the dissidents. A senior official said last night: "I can assure you that practically none of them [the dissidents] would have got out without the considerable help we gave them."

However, the immensity of the Chinese takeover has caused a small wave of panic to spread through the dissident commu-

nity, 21 of whose members have found new homes, while another 20 or so are undergoing processing for immigration.

Eight dissidents sent an ultimatum to the Governor, Chris Patten, insisting his administration provide more assistance. However, it appears that some members of the group have turned down offers of resettlement in Europe, preferring to go to North America, while others are having difficulty establishing their credentials as bona fide dissidents.

Asked what the administration was doing to help the dis-

sidents on his return from London, a rather tetchy Mr Patten said he hoped the people who sent the ultimatum "recognise that the way to deal with these sensitive and complicated issues is not by making threats or delivering so-called ultimatums".

China has not clarified its attitude towards dissidents remaining in Hong Kong after the handover in July. The Chinese government, which misses few opportunities to criticise the colonial government, is silent on this matter, strongly suggesting that it, too, wants the dissidents to leave.

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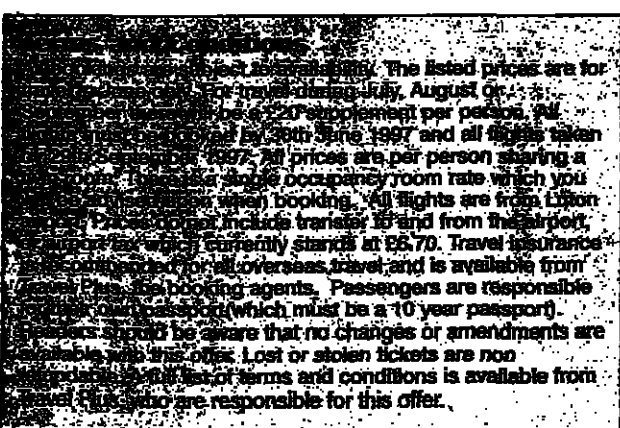
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opened up the city to the sea front and created an impressive and stylish setting which provides a host of choices for the first time visitor to indulge in some al fresco dining.

In stark contrast to Barcelona's modern Olympic facilities is the city's greatest monument, Antonio Gaudi's Sagrada Família. Begun over a century ago and yet to be completed, the Cathedral still reaches its crescendo above the city.

Artistically, Barcelona has many options. Gaudi, Picasso, Dali and Miro all have strong links with the city. The Museu Picasso, housed within a Medieval Gothic palace, is a testimony to the years Picasso spent in the city amongst Catalonia's avant garde.

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Hard cases indeed, but existing law can cope

Hard cases make a bad basis for changes in the law. Difficult and sometimes harrowing cases involving fertility, abortion, surrogacy, same sex adoption – and they have – have so far made no compelling case even for a review of existing law.

Take, first, the Kellys. As a manœuvre in a messy divorce, the husband turned to the courts to fight with his wife. The immediate argument was about whether she should carry their baby to term, but it must be clear to any onlooker that all kinds of other issues lay outside those that the court was being asked to resolve. The father has now changed his mind, which is good, and he should be glad that he came to his senses – but it was not before a motley crew of tabloid newspapers, the Cardinal Archbishop of Glasgow and abortion rights activists had clambered on to the wagon. As for the Scottish judges, it looks as though they have gone fishing in a legal pool most English lawyers had considered closed for the duration of the 1967 Abortion Law Reform Act. Nothing has emerged that suggests that the basic clause of that Act – termination of pregnancy shall be decided by a woman in consultation with two doctors – has suddenly become unambiguous.

The same can broadly be said of the excitement surrounding surrogacy. When we strip away the hype (and the

suspicion that a certain class of story gets more air-play and newspaper column inches over holiday weekends than at other times) the question boils down to whether existing British law is inadequate to cope with what may be a growing number of people wanting to acquire children by means of unrelated women's wombs. The answer is: case not proven, and that is not for the cowardly reason that instigating a review of surrogacy or adoption law would somehow be "dangerous". The stance adopted by Tessa Jowell, Minister for Health, is apposite: come to me, she said, with instances that look as if they expose the limitations of the present law, and I will look at them.

Because of its exotic circumstances, the case of two gay men with disabilities seeking a surrogate mother through the gay press has attracted understandable attention. "Exotic" only implies exceptional and unusual; all the more reason for not generalising on the basis of these particulars. As things stand there is nothing to stop these men being considered candidates to foster or adopt. Elaborate assessment procedures exist, involving, it is true, a wide exercise of professional discretion by social workers and judgements by lay panel members. There are some children, on the books of such agencies as Parents for Children, who might be happier or better cared for by gay, disabled men, in comparison with a life in



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institutional care. The law puts the welfare of the child at the centre of proceedings, which is how it should be.

Say these gay men find a woman willing to be impregnated and carry a child to term. They could seek to evade the regulatory regime run by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, by not using a registered clinic. If they did use such a clinic, the HFEA would require a parental order before the child were handed over, and they would not get one, since the law requires parents of different gender. If they did not use the official procedure the child would, in law, be its mother's

for all official purposes; she could "give" it to them, but that transfer would have no legal meaning. If they then sought its adoption, the rigorous adoption procedures would kick in.

Behind all this lies a principle of law which is also a matter of common sense: the child's well-being depends on there being someone identifiably responsible for it. That must, in the first instance, be the birth mother. If she cedes that responsibility, it should pass only under close legal supervision to a named other person, prepared to take on the work of a lifetime. There is not, nor should there be, any legal prohibi-

tion on that other person being gay or disabled, provided they possess the attributes of effective potential parenting.

But that is not the same as giving official encouragement to gay adoption or surrogacy, or providing scarce National Health Service resources to gay couples wanting, for example, sperm counts. Same-sex union is a happy and acceptable part of our society, and is gradually developing recognition and acceptance in a multitude of ways. But whatever else it may be, a homosexual or lesbian marriage very obviously precludes heterosexual procreation. How can gays and lesbians demand public assistance to help them achieve something that their sexuality specifically denies? It defies logic.

That does not mean that gay people cannot be good parents; of course they can be, and many are. And it is certainly open to them to point to the evidence of heterosexuals who are demonstrably worse parents. But the state's business, in this context, is to decide what is an appropriate way to spend tax resources. Would it really be so harsh for a cash-strapped public health service, which all the time makes utilitarian judgements, to argue that such arrangements lie outside the realm of state support?

The modern British state cannot enforce a morality, at least one with content any more specific than the

statement of Judeo-Christian liberal-humanist principles that the Department for Education and Employment has just endorsed. But moral neutrality is not at all the same as giving encouragement to arrangements, especially those for the nurture and upbringing of children, which are at best experimental. Doctors, social workers and guardians *ad litem* are all agents of the state in matters of child care. They need guidance on how to make judgements with consistency and fairness.

The Bill and Tony show

After charming Boris Yeltsin, it was no surprise that in their first meeting since Labour's victory Tony Blair should get on famously with President Clinton. Hobnobbing at international events such as yesterday's is part of what prime ministers do, and Mr Blair is shaping up as a great showman – in the best sense. But he must not confuse the glitter for substance nor start comparing himself with Bill Clinton. American presidents spend time on foreign affairs because the United States is a superpower, but also because their room for manoeuvre domestically is limited. Mr Blair's is not, so let us hope he does not become summit-struck.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pool resources for better ME treatment

Sir: Suzanne Moore's article ("The secret fears of the ME generation", 23 May) made much needed and serious points on how we view illness and put into perspective the genuine progress that has been made in understanding ME. She points to the deep-rooted prejudice that exists within society against an illness that has to do with the brain, which people still construe quite wrongly to mean that "it is all in the mind".

Nothing could be less true. As we come to understand the complexity of the brain, we understand the biological origin of the multitude of disorders. These are not "in the mind", they are as physical as any other illness. Yet this stigma still persists – despite the best efforts of science and the Royal College of Psychiatrists. The psychiatrist Dr Simon Wessely has been vocal in his support for the recognition of ME as a real rather than an imagined illness – a view expressed in the latest edition of the magazine I edit, *Understanding Stress, Anxiety and Depression*. His work and that of others has produced striking evidence of dysregulation of brain hormones in many sufferers. These discoveries make one hope that ME, like depression and anxiety, will now be better recognised by GPs – treatments will become more effective, and sufferers afforded more compassion.

Those who have fought hard to get ME recognised should now get together and pursue the serious business of medicine and science, putting funds and resources together. Within the ME debate it is high time to bury the hatchet of mind/body dualism for ever.

RICHARD HORNSBY
Editor
Understanding Stress, Anxiety and Depression
London SW1

Sir: Suzanne Moore wonders why people with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (or ME) will not accept that their illness may have a psychological cause, when complaints of stress are sounding all around them and "so many of us feel so sick and tired of life".

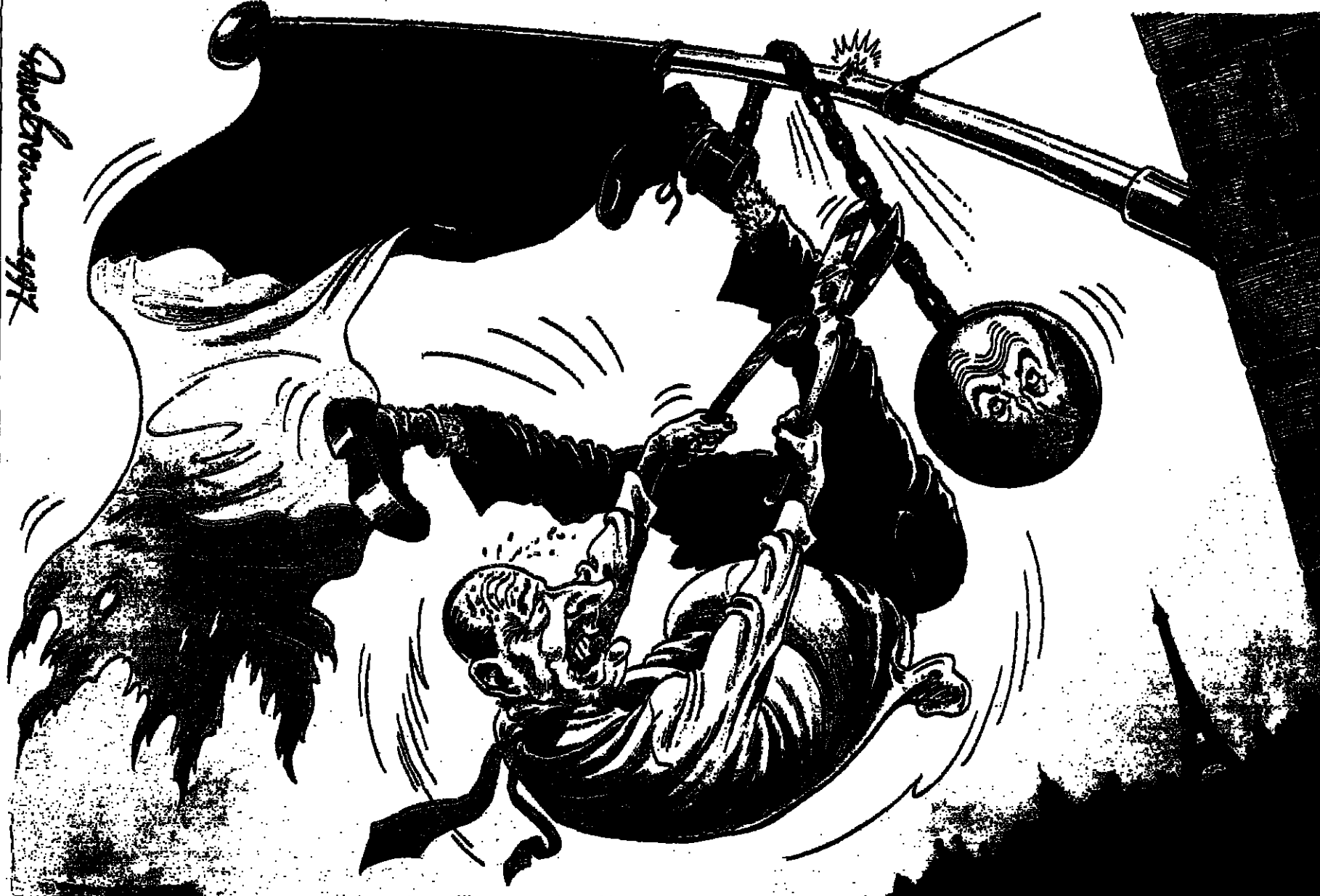
It is precisely this attitude – that someone who retreats from a busy life because of a mysterious health problem is a victim of a subconscious desire to lighten their schedule – that exasperates those people with ME who know that they were enjoying their lives before becoming ill, and who believe themselves capable of deploying less drastic coping strategies for a full diary.

Despite Ms Moore's assurance to the contrary, the psychiatrist's explanation for CFS is an insult. And for someone trying to hold on to their self-confidence in difficult circumstances, sympathy is no substitute for respect.

For a lot of people with ME, the story seems to be of a premature return to a busy lifestyle after a virus. What motivates this reluctance to recuperate properly is, of course, a mix of personal circumstance, personality and culture. So any purely physical explanation of the ME "epidemic" is, indeed, unfinished. But any psychological one that uses fear and unhappiness as its foundation is misguided, and arrogantly so.

CM CARDIFF
London SE5

Sir: Of course psychological illnesses are real. The reason that



ME sufferers (myself included) become infuriated by the suggestion that ME is in the mind is not in order to denigrate the very real trauma and suffering of psychological illnesses but because if ME is an organic illness, treatment by psychiatrists will be unhelpful and use up precious time and money that could be devoted to sensible research.

There is evidence that ME is organic. Tests have shown ME sufferers have abnormalities in neuro-hormonal function, especially in the mid-brain and hypothalamus, impaired blood flow to the brain and altered red blood cell shape populations.

ME is far more than just lethargy. Symptoms include flu-like malaise with profound fatigue, dizziness, distressing neurological problems, blurred vision, disturbed sleep, muscle fatigue, muscle pain and vulnerability to infections.

Surely ME can now move away from woolly hypothesising and into the domain of intelligent research into that it sufferers have so long waited for.

MELISSA VINEY
London SW15

Deportation: the harm to families

Sir: Since 1993 the churches have been expressing concern over families or family members facing deportation, particularly where the family has been resident in Britain for at least five years, with a child or children more than two years old. The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland

supports an "amnesty" for such families.

We were therefore disappointed to learn that on 8 May, one week after the election, despite representations from the Churches Commission for Racial Justice, a father who has two British children with a partner who has the right to remain in the UK was deported to Nigeria. We accept that this man's immigration record was poor. He had been told to leave the UK in 1987 and had not done so. However the partner and children who are left behind will suffer as much as he will, if not more.

The European Convention of Human Rights, to which Britain is a signatory and which Labour has said will be incorporated into British law, says in Article 8: "everyone has the right to respect for their private and family life". The Home Office says that by offering the mother and children a free trip to Nigeria it is fulfilling that obligation. We cannot accept this.

There are a number of such families facing deportation. Parents are living in fear; children are anxious and depressed. We were pleased to see Jay Khadka from Nepal being allowed to stay, but we plead with the Government to find a new way of dealing with families with children born here. Perhaps a tribunal should be set up, and if such people have evaded immigration law they may have to pay a fine, or – better still – undertake community service. But let not the punishment so greatly outweigh the crime. And let us

have this father back to join his children as soon as possible.

Rt Rev ROY WILLIAMSON
Bishop of Southwark
Rt Rev RICHARD HARRIES
Bishop of Oxford
Rt Rev ROGER SAINSBURY
Bishop of Barking
Rt Rev JOHN AUSTIN
Bishop of Aston
Rt Rev JOHN SENTAMU
Bishop of Stepney
Church Commission for Racial Justice
London SE1

Poor planning for mobile phones

Sir: Your editorial (24 May) omitted one important issue, that of the environmental impact of mobile phones.

Take a drive round the M25 and you cannot fail to notice the multitude of unsightly aerial towers which have sprouted during the past 15 years to service the needs of this growth industry. The towers are said to number some 8,000 at present, and are still increasing.

These structures may be acceptable in uninhabited regions beside motorways, but to ensure 90+ per cent coverage some must be sited in rural areas. To facilitate this the last government considerably relaxed planning regulations, to the extent that a tower of 15 metres could be constructed without planning permission, and issued guidelines advising local planners to be "alive to the special needs and

technical problems of telecommunications development", which the DOE have stated "should prevail over the normal planning policies which militate against inappropriate development". Local authorities can refuse permission for a structure that they consider unsuitable, but are reluctant to do so since their decisions have tended to be overruled by the DOE on appeal. CECIL and CHRISTINE HARDY
Ashford, Kent

Sir: Any legislation to ban use of mobile telephones by motorists would be another example of knee-jerk lawmaking on the back of quite justified public sympathy for an innocent motorist killed. The point about this recent case is that the driver using the phone was not just using a phone; he was also careless. Many thousands of innocent phone users should not be penalised for the few who are guilty.

PAUL SPENCER
Berkham, Berkshire

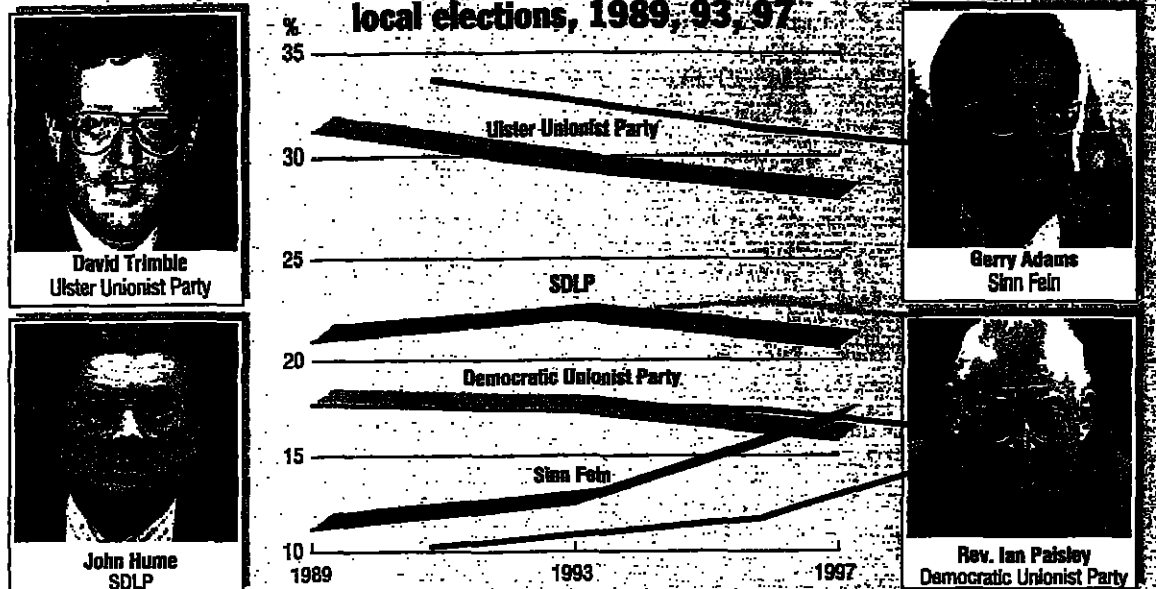
Courts will settle Camelot case

Sir: Your article "Camelot TV claims rejected" (22 May) was incorrect, as it implied that the Branson allegation had been dealt with by the Broadcasting Standards Commission. The allegation was not dealt with, as it is the subject of libel proceedings which are still to be heard. Further, you ignored the fact that the BBC did not escape criticism as, in some respects, the

Commission agreed that it would have been preferable to have treated the issues differently.

Northern Ireland changes colour

Share of vote of the major parties in Northern Ireland local elections, 1989, 93, 97



The long-standing Protestant majority in Ulster is being threatened by the rising nationalist 'green' vote and consequent 'Orange flight', writes David McKittrick

The political map of Northern Ireland has just changed dramatically, with profound implications for its politics, its future and how its people live together. The balance of power between nationalist and Unionist has fundamentally shifted.

Northern Irish nationalism is unmistakably on the move, making dramatic advances politically, socially, economically and numerically. Even a preliminary bout of number-crunching in the wake of this month's national and local elections shows that something big is happening.

Those numbers, and much else, are changing fast; and since Northern Ireland's history and politics are based on the numbers game, its very fabric is being transformed. The ratio of two-thirds Protestant to one-third Catholic which was the consistent backdrop to politics for so many decades has gone, to be replaced by a new mathematical and political model.

And not only are there more nationalists than ever before, they are more confident, younger, and better off than ever. They have, in John Hume and Gerry Adams, formidable political leaders with a flair for publicity and, abroad, a talent for winning friends and influencing people which is the envy of their Unionist opponents.

Unionists will find a great deal to worry about in last week's local election results, which show up both falling numbers and falling morale. They will worry in particular about Sinn Féin, whose popularity is soaring at a rate never before seen in Northern Ireland politics.

Catholics have increased from a third

to at least 43 per cent of the population, and probably more. The political effect of this, masked for many years because much of the Catholic population was under voting age, is now impacting on politics.

In 1983 nationalists held two of the 17 Westminster seats; today five of the 18 MPs are nationalist. In the general election the nationalist share of the vote touched 40 per cent for the first time ever. In the 1985 local government elections Sinn Féin and the SDLP together won 189,000 votes; in last week's elections they polled 237,000.

The Unionists lost control of four councils, the western territories of Cookstown, Fermanagh, Strabane and, carrying a huge symbolic charge, Belfast itself. Before last week 16 of the 26 councils were controlled by Unionists, six by nationalists, while four had no overall majority. Now Unionists control only 13, nationalists have eight, and five have no clear majority. Citadels are crumbling.

The fall of Fermanagh, the westernmost and one of the geographically largest councils, means none of the west is under Unionist control. Overall there is still a clear Protestant majority but increasingly it is concentrated in the east, particularly in the greater Belfast area.

The Ulster Unionists and Sinn Féin, with 13 councillors each, are the largest parties in the city, which now resembles a political doughnut, with an ever-more nationalist core surrounded by Protestant satellite towns. Both middle-class and working-class Protestants are resorting to a local version of white flight, moving out to leave the city to the Catholics. This phenomenon, mischievously described by a nationalist coun-

cillor as Orange flight, may well be accelerated by the fall of city hall.

This exodus is one of the ways in which Unionists are responding to the new demographic realities. Another section of the Protestant electorate simply switched off, and stayed at home on polling day. "There's apathy and confusion among the Unionist people," one defeated Belfast councillor complained. "They've nobody to blame but themselves, because they didn't come out to vote."

One key question is how the traditional Unionist parties will react to the shifts in population and hence in power. The septuagenarian Rev. Ian Paisley, who has just had two bad elections in a row, is too old a dog to learn new tricks. His deputy, Peter Robinson, may some day do business, but not until his Ayatollah departs the scene. In the meantime, Mr Paisley, having spent three decades in the last ditch, is not about to leave it now.

The focus of attention is therefore on David Trimble and his Ulster Unionists, who are still the largest party. If Mr Paisley will not do a deal – either with Sinn Féin or without it – then in logic the Ulster Unionists are the only remaining candidates. The party's performance has been mixed, with a poor forum election last year, then a good Westminster result, but the local government outcome was cheerless for them. The theory goes that Mr Trimble, now that he has reached an election-free zone, will have more room to manoeuvre.

It is not a particularly comfortable position for him, for the Paisleyite fundamentalists have not gone away. But on the other hand Tony Blair and Mo Mowlam – the woman who put the Mo into momentum – will be pushing hard for him to show new flexibility and early movement.

The changing demographics and other elements argue for a historic new deal, which means a historic new compromise, but Mr Trimble will be well aware that previous Unionist leaders who struck out in that direction quickly perished. One set of voices within Unionism argues – quietly, for the



Electoral success: almost all the fast-growing nationalist vote is going to Gerry Adams's Sinn Féin

Photograph: Pacemaker

charge of heresy is still a potent accusation – that it is time to make a deal, on the grounds that the demographic and other factors mean Unionism's position weakens with each passing year.

A key defining moment will come, perhaps quite soon, if and when the IRA declares a second ceasefire. If they do, it will be because of a government assurance of speedy entry into round-table talks, and Mr Paisley has made it clear that if republicans walk through the front door he will storm out through the nearest exit. At that point the Ulster Unionists must decide whether to go with him, or stay and negotiate.

While a Paisley walk-out would exert a powerful pull, Mr Trimble could receive a fair amount of cloud cover, should he decide to stay, from the fringe loyalists. Several of their members are still slightly hung over from celebrating their conspicuous electoral success.

These groups, the Progressive Unionists and Ulster Democratic Party, are known as the public voice of the illegal loyalist paramilitary groups, but after winning a number of council seats they can now claim to have their own mandate. While their associates have guns and bombs, most of those who voted for them did so because the DUP and DUP project a willingness to compromise.

Their securing an appreciable foothold in electoral politics is a serious nuisance for the established Unionist parties, since it means the Protestant vote is fragmented. But the loyalists will probably stay in talks if Sinn Féin come in, and London and Dublin hope that would encourage Mr Trimble to stay, too.

Just as thousands of Protestants

believe the loyalists when they say they want to be less paramilitary and more political, so do most nationalists accept that Sinn Féin wants a new peace process. As one seasoned observer put it: "The nationalist community has accepted that Sinn Féin and the IRA want to pack it in, move away from the violence and get some sort of overall settlement. The nationalist community believes them."

This may well be the principal explanation for the extraordinary rise in Sinn Féin's vote, which leapt from 12.4 per cent four years ago to 16.9 per cent last week. The fact is that nearly all of the fast-growing nationalist vote is going to Sinn Féin, while support for the SDLP remains static. In the Eighties Sinn Féin built a solid but limited electoral base of around 11 per cent of the vote, but since the early Nineties, when republicans adopted the language of peace and later staged a 17-month ceasefire, this has skyrocketed to almost 17 per cent.

There are other explanations too. If the allegations are correct and republicans have indeed been stealing votes, this clearly augmented their total, though hardly by more than a few thousand of their 107,000-vote total. But whether or not Sinn Féin has been stealing SDLP votes, they have certainly been stealing the SDLP's clothes in terms of policies, concepts and language. Phrases such as peace, peace process, the need for the two governments to work together, and so on, all originated with the SDLP and have been appropriated by the republicans. "The Sinners have been copying Hume's eckers [homework]," complained an SDLP teacher.

Sinn Féin has also been reaping the rich harvest of new nationalist voters,

in particular those who were jolted into voting for the first time by last year's Drumcree disturbances. The sense of nationalist indignation at that episode has scarcely dimmed since last July. They are also mobilising a younger and more dedicated – if only because more likely to be unemployed – constituency.

It is impossible to say which of these ingredients has contributed most to the new republican voting surge, though it is likely the peace aspect has provided the greatest boost. But the bad news for Unionists is that there are more nationalists than ever and they are more ambitious and energetic than ever.

This new assertiveness, coupled with the relative decline of the Protestant population, is the key to explaining why so many controversies arise over loyalist marches. In most cases the problems arise when loyalists attempt to continue to parade through districts which were Protestant but are now Catholic. First, the districts have changed their religion; second, their denizens no longer accept without demur what are viewed as triumphalist exercises.

The day when nationalists may have a majority is still far off. But the rise in the Catholic population, taken together with this new nationalist confidence and a lack of Unionist direction, means that the whole system is changing.

Nationalists in general, and the republican movement in particular, have clearly become empowered politically: the hope is that this will lead the IRA to conclude that a real and ready-made alternative to violence exists. The chances of a new ceasefire have been strengthened by the new sense that nationalism is on the move, and that a new political landscape is fast taking shape.



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Beware the sons of quantity surveyors ...

I was up early this weekend: the baby was a bit colicky, and needed to be walked about. So it was with warm child on one shoulder that I one-handedly turned the pages of the newspapers, and came across the sad biography of Adam Perry – the man who has slept with 3,000 women. No, not slept. Only members of the Chinese Red Army can credibly claim to having slept with 3,000 people. The man who has had sex with 3,000 women.

A male model, Mr Perry is now 33 – the age, I believe, that Jesus was when he was crucified. But while the Saviour had only a handful of miracles, a few books (none of which he wrote himself), a major religion and one resurrection to show for his time on earth, Mr Perry must have risen from the dead many, many times during his hectic sexual career.

The arithmetic is instructive. Mr Perry "lost his virginity" at the age of 15, in the year that Mrs Thatcher came to power. Since then – to arrive at the three-grand figure – he must have had congress with a new woman

(I nearly used the word fresh) every 36 hours.

This is tough going. Illness alone must have interrupted coitus on, say, a score of occasions in 18 years. Also, Mr Perry is only human, and the natural desire to sleep with the same woman from time to time will – even if stoutly resisted on most occasions – have led to a dent in his average. This would all have had to have been made up later: a steady girlfriend will have meant months of especially frenetic intercourse.

Unholy shags must have stacked up, circling Mr Perry's bed like charter planes awaiting landing at a busy airport. This leaves no time for seduction at all: just the act.

Anticipation is nothing for Mr Perry – the performance is everything. (For many of us, particularly as we get older, the anticipation, by contrast, becomes practically everything. I can be positively poetic about anticipation.)

Nor is there any question of taking that wonderful, long, post-coital walk in a sunlit park, lightheadedly contemplating one's own



David Aaronovitch

attractiveness. It is sex with all the psychological bits taken out, reduced to sweat, grinding and orgasm. Mr Perry is to true sensuality what Raulph Fiennes is to promenading.

The model, who lives in a council flat with a Rottweiler and a mastiff (both of whom have probably had it off with 3,000 lady dogs, and never bashed out on his fame. A book is to be published, as well as a new brand of condoms (I would suggest that each protective bear a

girl's name, providing a useful reminder at critical times).

Like the writers Henry Miller and Georges Simenon, Perry is proud of his record in a way that only a man could be.

As most new men know, some deep sadness accounts for this uncomfortable promiscuity. Here is a man who is incapable of forming proper relationships with women, so forms hundreds of improper ones instead. It is little surprise that Perry comes from a broken home, and that his father is – of all things – a quantity surveyor. Had he been a quality controller, perhaps things might have been different.

But why do the women do it? After all, where is the pleasure in having what any other girl can have, and many have already had? How does it come about that, while most men approach seduction with a combination of elemental emotions and a series of quasi-mathematical calculations that would put Deep Blue – the chess computer which triumphed over Kasparov – to shame, the very same difficult women

will leap into the sack with Perry at the first sound of a zip unfastening? "They come up to me two or three at a go," Mr Perry has revealed. I think it is because a very few men possess a unique property, somehow allowing women to have sex with them uncomplicatedly.

These men are society-free zones, in whose boudoir the normal, restrictive laws of love and relationships do not run. They do not behave in excessively lascivious ways: the do not grope or fondle at parties, nor do they send their eyes darting down every cleavage like mini-cameras in keyhole surgery. The coupling is, in a real sense, animal.

When I was younger I thought this was very strange. I can recall periods of unattachment when even one girlfriend at a time would have seemed plenty. At work I made it clear to all the attractive young women that I was available; that no job was too small. Nothing. Yet there was one man that practically all had sex with. And him, I feel really sorry for.

Miles Kingston is on holiday

The French needs to English

A French labor market to respond to global change the future kind

Exhibit

So many materials page, and imagine

The French élite needs to take an English lesson

One of the small parties that fell at the first hurdle in the French elections at the weekend was a group opposed to the élite Ecole Nationale d'Administration. Even so, this training ground for the country's political, civil service and business élite still stands accused by its critics of the gravest sin imaginable for a ruling class: incompetence.

The anti-Ena party's manifesto quoted the comic Coluche: "If you put them in charge of the Sahara, within five years they would be buying in sand." The most glaring incompetence of France's élite has been its failure to prevent or reverse the country's rise in unemployment, now among the highest in the developed world. Yet its refusal to draw any lessons from the Anglo-Saxon jobs experience is shared by French voters, who leaned at the weekend towards the Socialist Party's programme of job-sharing and big increases in the minimum wage.

As the first stage of the elections took place, I was attending a wedding in Paris between a French woman and an English man. One of the other guests assured me that there were more and more of these cross-Channel marital alliances, not because of the convenience of the Eurostar but rather because sensible Frenchwomen had an eye on their future financial security. "France shines only at unemployment these days," she said.

The costs of Continental-style capitalism were also uppermost in the minds of ministers meeting in Paris at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development earlier this week. Helen Liddell, the new Economic Secretary to the Treasury, tried to balance cosy chat about economic solidarity and cohesion, which pleased the French enormously, with harsh pragmatism about jobs, which did not.

It is an uncomfortable fact for a shiny new left-of-centre European government to sit on, because the options in economic policy are widely seen – in Britain as well as the Continent – as flexibility or fairness, but not both. This trade-off did not bother the Tories, who reckoned that if they created the flexibility, the fairness could take care of itself. The result was that inequality and the number of working poor increased to an extent that British voters found unacceptable.

The French electorate is just as unhappy about the prospect of increased insecurity and inequality. But the real cross-Channel chasm has been that nobody in French political circles has been prepared to argue that high unemployment is the biggest unfairness of all, or make the case for measures that would start to chip away at unemployment, such as reducing the extraordinarily high minimum wage for young people.

It is hard to blame the French for ignoring the *Rosby* message of deregulation, garnished as it was with undisputed triumphalism and a sour dash of Euroscepticism by the Tories. But Labour should learn their French lesson well, and not forget the merits of having flexibility in



Diane Coyle

A flexible labour market able to respond to global change is the fairest kind

the jobs market. Because there is a danger in this New Dawn of people concluding that the resounding May Day vote to bring down the curtain on unfettered free markets means that deregulation as such has been proved a failure. A big chunk of Tony Blair's electorate believes that the British economy is in a bad way, that mass unemployment persists and flexibility has achieved nothing but the insecurity and misery of the huddled masses.

The Government will be making a big mistake if it plays along with this defeatist psychology. For it has inherited the healthiest economy in living memory, with joblessness falling rapidly and British business competitive despite the strong pound. Tory policies in the end have worked at getting Britain working. Deregulation has created jobs.

The Government does want to include those excluded by poverty and insecurity, as well as unemployment – to govern for the many – and thank goodness for that. Let's hope it can succeed in getting unemployed young people into jobs, so they can share the general joy in the revolutionary dawn. But it should not forget that the number of unemployed young people was already falling rapidly before the election. In the month before polling day, there were fewer people out of work for more than six months than the 250,000 who were intended to be the first beneficiaries of welfare-to-work policies. Between the campaign and the Queen's speech, the promise had to be broadened to include the short-term young unemployed. It will not be long before it has to be extended to the over-25s too.

The Government has set itself some serious hurdles in the flexibility stakes, the introduction of a minimum wage being the biggest. Will its Low Pay Commission be set up to deliver a figure for the minimum that meets high union demands but would certainly dampen job growth? Or will it produce a cautiously low figure that will outlaw the worst behaviour by cowboy employers but not make a noticeable difference to income inequality? If it opts for the former, New Labour will have become the first victim of its own rhetoric of fairness.

At a time like ours, when the economy is at the mercy of big global changes, a flexible labour market able to respond to industrial restructuring is in fact the fairest kind. It produces the most opportunities. What we need in Britain is an improvement on Tory policies in order to offset the worst dislocations of economic upheaval, not the complete overthrow of those jobs policies.

The French claim to have a fair jobs market, but it is not; there are too many people without jobs, a worse kind of social exclusion than low pay and lousy conditions. They have a genuine grievance against their political élite, for even people as clever as the graduates of Ena have failed to understand that flexibility is essential for fairness. If the finest blooms of the French educational system cannot accept that, why should the average voter?

They all want to be left holding the baby

by Paul Vallely

"We all have the right to have children – it doesn't matter who we are or what we are – and I want to be able to take part in that right." So speaks Russell Conlon, who with his partner Stephen is now looking for a lesbian couple to have a baby for them.

Reproduction seems to inspire much talk of rights. Take the case of James Kelly, who yesterday gave up his legal battle to stop his estranged wife Lynne Kelly having an abortion. Here we have the woman's right to choose, the right of the fetus to life, and now the right of the father to participate in the decision. With the last news outburst of surrogacy we had the Dutch couple Clemens and Sonja Peters insisting on their right to buy a baby for £12,000 in expenses from surrogate Karen Roche. And then there was Ms Roche's right to change her mind – not once but several times, announcing she had had abortion, then she hadn't, then she had decided to keep the baby for herself, then she had decided to offer it to yet another couple.

There is something decidedly modern about all these conflicting rights. The tyranny of the single truth bedevils political debate in our single-issue age. But it is technology which is at the core of the new sexual problems. Twenty years ago adoption was the only solution to infertility. Now medicine has opened up a whole range of options from super-ovulatory drugs and pregnancy-promoting chemicals to artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilisation and surrogacy. It has also brought increasingly sophisticated techniques of abortion.

Changes in social mores have accompanied the process. Russell Conlon was told that he and his partner were rejected as foster parents and refused a child for adoption because they are both registered as disabled and living on state benefit. He insists that the reason was that they are gay.

If so, there are many who would applaud the decision. "God help us. What is the world coming to?" said the Tory MP Nicholas Winterton. "To seek to bring up a child in that situation would be unnatural and totally wrong."

But there are many others who would agree with Dr Vivienne Nathanson, head of ethics at the British Medical Association, who suggests: "Children do well in any stable loving family – and that can include a single parent or two of the same sex."



In the family way, clockwise from top: Stephen and Russell Conlon, Karen Roche, Sonja and Clemens Peters, Lynne and James Kelly

Everyone demands their 'rights' in modern battles over reproduction. But conflicting demands are leading us into an ethical minefield

Clearly this area is an ethical minefield. There are issues of consistency: can it be right that infertility treatment is available under one health authority while it is denied to those who live across the street in another? There are issues of public spending – priority: should such treatment be available on the NHS at all? There are issues of principle: are some kinds of treatment, such as those which involve the dis-

carding of fertilised embryos, ethically unacceptable?

"Because there's a medical solution to infertility, people assume it must be a medical problem," says Dr Nathanson. But is infertility due to a gay lifestyle a health care issue? And why is it right for society to discriminate when selecting parents for adoption when it makes no claims to regulate parenthood by natural means?

There are those who argue that such discrimination is not just morally permissible, it's obligatory. "There is no right to adopt a child," argues Will Cartwright, a philosopher at the University of Essex who specialises in ethics and adoption. "Rather there is a responsibility on behalf of society to find the best home for a child."

All of which rather goes against the tone of many contemporary arguments which begin and end with the speaker and his or her needs. "There are other objections. 'The law doesn't recognise rights in these areas,'" says Pat Walsh, director of the Centre for Medical Ethics at King's College, London. "It speaks only of the best interests of the patient." Nor are rights a useful moral tool, according to

Ted Honderich, Grote Professor of Philosophy and Logic at University College, London. "Talk of rights is effectively question-begging," he says: a 'right' is often just a moral judgement in disguise. "It's a statement which pretends to take the argument on more than it does."

Surrogacy is intrinsically problematic. "When you take reproduction out of its natural context it's bound to throw up problems," says Pat Walsh. "Of course it's a slippery concept – what's natural, what's normal – but it is a notion which still has some use."

Reservations are both theoretical and practical: the Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, warned yesterday about the dangers of removing elements from the matrix of sexuality, while Britain's first surrogate mother, Mary Stewart, expressed regret that she ever had someone else's baby and said it had "affected my life in a big way." "We do need someone gathering data on this," admits Dr Nathanson.

The issue is a Pandora's Box. Government ministers have expressed reluctance to enter into major legislation on surrogacy, though they will consider tightening the law if rules on payment of expenses are being over-stretched.

But there are arguments for making the law more restrictive, as in Holland, or more contractual, as in the United States. "Once you get into the business of assisting people to have children the ethics become rather different," says Pat Walsh.

Will Cartwright agrees. A couple who have a child in the normal way might be said to have a 'right' to children in the sense that, if the state intervened and said they couldn't, the rest of us would find that unacceptable. "But once you get into IVF a couple are asking for assistance from others, and those others have the right to ask whether they want to cooperate, and on what terms." So there is a potent argument for higher standards to apply in deciding who should be a surrogate and who should be allowed to enter into arrangements with surrogates.

There is another option. "There are still considerable social pressures for people to have children," says Vivienne Nathanson. "Perhaps we need to lessen them." Childlessness could become a choice rather than a curse. But then denial is contrary to the spirit of the age.

Exhibit A: pretension

With so many materials on offer, why does an artist choose language, and imagine he can fashion it better than a poet?

A "Challenge of Materials" show opened two weeks ago at London's Science Museum, and poets got invited to the party. There's a fab steel wedding dress (what an image of bondage), chocolate shoes, an aluminium handbag, clothes by Vivienne Westwood and Jeff Banks, a glass bridge straight from *The Wizard of Oz* and a naked man spreadeagled in transparent plastic glory so you see all the bio-compatible surgical implants – from gold hip-joints to polyurethane urethras – that people are wearing these days. The show is on for 10 years. It's brilliant. I'm going to keep going back.

But only when my indignation about the party has died down. The museum commissioned artists and one poet to do things for the show. The artists' work is on display all round the gallery. At early meetings the poet, Selima Hill, got told, "An artist might want to use some of your work." She had a short think. "Or I might want to use theirs," she said. Co-operation went to use theirs, she said. Co-operation projects got dropped like a charred potato. She decided her contribution would be the riddles about the materials, written in the voice of each. "We can't put your work on the walls," she said. "Walks are for artists," she suggested they print riddle-cards to set visitors guessing, searching the gallery for things made in each material. This didn't sound like proper art, maybe if an artist sound like proper art, it would have. Her teasing, thought-provoking poems got put at the back of folders about the materials.

The focus of the opening party was a performance by the artist Brian Catlin, whose installations in the gallery included a row of potted materials he might do something with some day. "I'll go deep in to the heart of the forest to hew it out," he'd handwritten (or something in that vein) on textured paper. He called the whole thing, writing paper, "Pledge". Which must, along with "Bleed" and "Twilight", be high on poetry's hit-list of Twenty Most Pretentious.

The material he unwisely wished to challenge in performance was words. He'd ducked the globe's entire spectrum of



Ruth Padel

material resources, from alabaster to zinc. (The UK steel industry coughed up £3m for this show; other sponsors include ICI and the Aluminium Federation. Think of all the materials you can challenge with that lot.) This man sat down and read words for half an hour, with not a joke in sight. He wasn't up to iron, let alone irony. Danny Kaye, singing his "The Emperor's New Clothes" song, galloped into my mind.

Isn't it grand, isn't it fine? Look at the cut, the style, the line.

This suit of clothes is altogether, but altogether.

The most remarkable suit of clothes that I have ever seen.

These eyes of mine at once determine the sleeves are velvet, the cape is ermine.

The hose are blue and the doublet is a lovely shade of green.

So (poet behaving badly) I asked an organiser why, with one of the best poets in the country on tap, they'd got someone else to make the poet's medium at this opening party? She went a bit pink. "I thought it beautiful," she said bravely. ("Your Majesty, this is a magic suit and you, being very wise and very intelligent, can see how beautiful it is." What an artist he was, Danny Kaye.) The audience didn't share her view. "Conceptual art gives concepts a bad name anyway, but this must be post-conceptual," groaned a philosophy professor. "Cheap

Larkin – not up to karaoke at the Pig and Firkin," said a student up from Bristol.

Performance material available at that party included three Faber poets, three Bloodaxes and a Chatto. (Free drink must have had something to do with it.) If the organisers wanted a performance that would mix the challenge of words with that of other materials, why not ask seven poets to create a quick sculpture with hammer, hairdrier and steel shavings? I'd have loved to see Hugo Williams, dress scarf in one pocket, knocking up an installation in "blue hair" (a lapiz lazuli look-alike available in ancient Egypt). An artist could then do a 10-minute poem on "The Sculpture Hugo Williams Never Made". The rumour "The Challenge of Materials" OK.

As it was, the poets melted as far as they could from the reading. I found a shell-shocked bunch of them at the end of the gallery, wondering why poets are always at the bottom of the pack. "I suppose if I'd offered to sculpt, it might have been different," said Selima apologetically. She'd done brilliant work here, but suddenly felt she hadn't stood up enough for poetry and lack of pretension. "I wanted to stick to my own material and dig deeper, rather than skate off and do superficial things somewhere else."

Quite. I'm not against artists. (Some of my best friends. Really.) Nor against museums using artists to illustrate the challenge of materials – a lively idea, I'm on the side of words against artists. Who take themselves Seriously (or get themselves to do it for them) in words. The world is pulsating with other materials for artists to get challenged by. Can't they go a bit deeper into the possibilities of silicon, rubber and blue hair, instead of abusing our sole material?

Where to hear poets unpatronised by post-conceptual art. Selima Hill, Helen Dunmore, Exeter and Devon Arts Centre, 30 May (01392 42111). Gillian Allart, Katrina Porteous, 6 June, Durham (0191 386 611, x 338). Richard McKean, Pussycat Petis, Scott Varner, Wigmore-Simonovic, 9 June, Troubadour Café, 265 Old Brompton Road, London SW5.

Bad is good for business

The "bad boy" image has long existed in the land of rock'n'roll. The Rolling Stones trashed hotel rooms in the Sixties. The Seventies saw Johnny Rotten exude punk angst. Metallica gave voice to the angry young man of the Eighties. But it was all good fun, something which can hardly be said of the violence which surrounds Nineties rap music.

Rap sales rocketed, making inner-city singers the new idols who earned millions faster than they are lost in a Wall Street crash. Inevitably an image was created to match the music, and as the names of groups such as Public Enemy and Niggaz With Attitude show, music's latest sensation was not about to promote peace and free love.

With lyrics laden with threats of killings and gang war it was perhaps unavoidable that someone was going to get hurt. In September 1996 the Los Angeles star Tupac Shakur was gunned down in Las Vegas.

Last March Notorious B.I.G., a New York rapper, met a similar fate. Both were stars of gangsta rap, both former crack dealers, and both are thought to have been victims of a war as the East and West coasts of America lead semi-automatics and carry the battle for supremacy out of the recording studio and onto the streets.

The Atlantic Ocean gives us a comfortable distance from which to follow proceedings. The closest British music comes to bloodshed is the Battle of Britpop – and that was recently

settled with a jolly game of footy between Blur and Oasis. But if Britain has yet to produce its own gangsta rap, that has not stopped the image coming across the pond. Earlier this month Mark Morrison (pictured) burst out from behind the blackened windows of his American car with a bodyguard shouting in an American drawl and ran into Marylebone Magistrates' Court where he was sentenced to three months in prison for threatening a police officer with a 25,000-volt stun gun.

The American influence on Morrison is unmistakable. Having spent his teens in Florida he still has the accent; he wears the heavy gold jewellery and lavish fur coats reminiscent of early rap artists, and he has broken into the US market. Even the weapon at the centre of the trouble was bought in America. As Bob Kilbourn, editor of *Blues & Soul Magazine*, says: "The whole thing about Mark is that he thinks he is American."

So far, this is the closest a British star has come to the ghetto violence around which gangsta rap is based. Does this mark the beginning of yet another American trend in British music? If Morrison's promoters cash-in on his imprisonment they could be setting a precedent. "Hopefully the prompt action of the court will stamp it out," says Kilbourn. "but it could give the green light to others if he comes out to \$2m of promotion."

Christian Broughton

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Halifax float gives inflation a little extra help

COMMENT

'For a lot of people a choice between a mysterious and risky financial asset and a fistful of cash is a no-brainer'

The prospect of £2,000 in his back pocket has clearly been too much for Joe Halifax. The theory that the strong run in the recently floated Alliance & Leicester would persuade Halifax members to hang on to their windfalls was confounded yesterday after almost a quarter said: never mind the shares, give us the lolly. What this says about the society's 8 million members is unclear.

One possible, if charitable, explanation for this week's rush to the exit is the increasing sophistication of the British public after 15 years of shareholder capitalism. With IG Index, the spread betting specialist, forecasting a 700p close on the first day of dealings in Halifax shares, some members clearly took the view that most of the good news was already in the price. Halifax no doubt deserves a decent rating, but a premium to both the sector favourite, Lloyds TSB, and the market as a whole looks ambitious.

The less charitable answer is that for many Halifax account holders this sort of payout represents a never to be repeated opportunity to have that holiday in the sun or computer. They probably don't own any other shares and wouldn't know what to do with them anyway. For a lot of people a choice between a mysterious and risky financial asset and a fistful of cash is a no-brainer.

Whatever interpretation you put on the figures, it is probably bad news for the economy. No doubt some of the windfall gains will go, not on spending binges, but to top

up PEPs or into some other form of sensible investment. Perhaps even a punt on the next demutualising society. It is a fair bet that older, wealthier and more sophisticated investors are not well represented in those who plan to cash in their chips next week. Far more likely, the sellers are young recipients of the minimum 200 share handout for whom £1,400 represents a fantastic what-the-hell plunge. Part of the £2bn will be lavished in the bars and restaurants of the Costa, but it is hard to imagine the rest won't do its inflationary worst at home.

Taxing questions raised by the Green Budget

The Green Budget presentation by the IFS and Goldman Sachs is always fascinating, unrivalled in its thoroughness and clarity. It sets out, with a bluntness rare in the official version, the drawbacks of government tax and spending proposals.

This time it is especially interesting because of the closeness of Guy Davies, the chief economist at Goldman Sachs, to Gordon Brown. Yesterday's Green Budget has given us all an insight into the advice he has been giving the Chancellor.

The bottom line was that there is no urgent need for an increase in taxation, that the public finances are probably in a sustainable position without any remedial action by Mr Brown. Mr Davies' line of argu-

ment was that plans inherited from Ken Clarke already involve a substantial tightening in fiscal policy, so that by the time the economy is back at its long-term trend next year, government borrowing will be at the target long-run level of around 1.5 per cent of GDP or £12bn.

There are two crucial assumptions here that make all the difference to whether or not you believe there remains a structural "black hole" in government finances.

One is that the Government will stick to the spending plans with a ferocity that even Mrs Thatcher failed to achieve. If, on the other hand, spending follows the pattern established over the past 18 years, it will take the PSBR higher - nothing frightening but above the long-run target by about 1 percentage point of GDP.

The other assumption is that the economy gets back to its trend next year rather than this. If it is there now, borrowing ought to be running at half its current level already.

There are excellent reasons for the Chancellor not raising taxes by very much, but they are chiefly political. Labour would be as damaged by a betrayal of the electorate's expectations as John Major's government was by its 1993/94 tax hikes. The economic case for putting government finances on a truly sustainable footing rather than a possibly or probably sustainable one, still remains.

There could be no clearer indication of this than another figure in the Green Bud-

get. Low investment, asset sales and high borrowing have cut the worth of the public sector by two-thirds in the past seven years. If the entire machinery of government were closed down today and all its possessions, including every road, hospital and school, were sold off, it would fetch only £160bn. Taxes may not go up this Budget, but eventually they will have to if Labour wants to rebuild the kind of Britain we all want.

Spice fails to make EMI flavour of the month

Sir Colin Southgate has another three years to run at EMI until he becomes Ex-Spice. With the outlook patchy at best, he will just have to soldier on for the time being as Mixed Spice. Despite the phenomenal contribution of Geri, Mel B, Mel C, Emma and Victoria to EMI's bottom line (£12 million sales and number one hits in 14 countries) the business as a whole is not firing on anywhere near that number of cylinders.

Since the demerger from Thorn last August, the shares have underperformed the market by a third and yesterday they continued their downward spiral. Oblivious to the prospect of *Spice Girls: The Movie* and the £500m capital repayment Sir Colin conjured up keep investors happy.

In fairness, this underperformance is in some ways the flip side of the meteoric rise

Thorn-EMI enjoyed as it prepared to do the splits and the market speculated on the premium the music business would command when it was snapped up by Disney, Seagram, Bertelsmann, take your pick.

But the deeper seated difficulties were always there. Growth in the music industry world-wide has slowed to barely half its trend rate of 7-8 per cent and no one expects much improvement for the rest of this decade.

Now, EMI has come up with some home-grown problems of its own. Rich Spice, aka Jim Field, the phenomenally well-paid chief executive of EMI Music, has discovered that rap does not travel very well outside the US and is having to spend £117m to put things right.

If the bad news was unexpected then so was the good news. EMI was under no pressure to return 10 per cent of its capital to shareholders. So the plan to reward investors through some unspecified but presumably tax-efficient mechanism looks like a defensive move, notwithstanding all the talk about gearing up and reducing the cost of capital.

Whether the bid will come now that Seagram, the favoured suitor, is apparently out of the picture, is another matter. In the meantime, EMI and its other half, Thorn, which has performed even more abysmally, remain living testimony to way demergers can destroy shareholder value as well as enhance it.

Green Budget urges Brown to go steady with tax increases

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Gordon Brown was advised yesterday not to increase taxes by much in the forthcoming Budget, but instead to leave it to the Bank of England to prevent the economy overheating by raising interest rates.

The advice came from Guy Davies, the chief economist at Goldman Sachs and a Labour Party adviser, in the investment bank's traditional joint "Green Budget" with the Institute for Fiscal Studies. It runs counter to recent lobbying from business, which would prefer tax increases because of fears that higher rates will boost the pound.

The Green Budget also warned that the Government would find it hard to save money on benefits through its welfare-to-work schemes, as only

£7bn of the £100bn social security budget is spent on the unemployed. Andrew Dilnot, director of the IFS, said serious social security reform must instead involve the three-quarters of the budget that goes on the old and long-term sick.

The IFS urged the Government against rushing into radical reform of corporate taxation without further consultation.

The Green Budget predicted that base rates will rise to at least 7.25 per cent next year from 6.25 per cent now. It combined this with a forecast of almost no net increase in taxation beyond the windfall tax, most of which will be spent on welfare-to-work schemes.

Presenting the document, Mr Davies said: "The case for a significant increase in tax is not proven." Not only would it be politically unattractive, he said,

but the underlying state of the government finances was not as bad as some commentators had suggested.

One reason was that the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement had already improved more than expected as the economy picked up, mainly because of higher corporate tax revenues.

Another was that pre-announced increases in excise duties and the abolition of profit related pay mean taxes will rise by nearly £8bn next year even if Mr Brown does nothing.

Assuming the Government sticks to the tough spending plans set out in last November's Budget as it has pledged, the government's finances will be in surplus by 1999/2000, Mr Davies said. This would put the Chancellor on course to meet his target of borrowing no more than the government spent on

investment over the course of the business cycle, the so-called "golden rule" for taxes and spending.

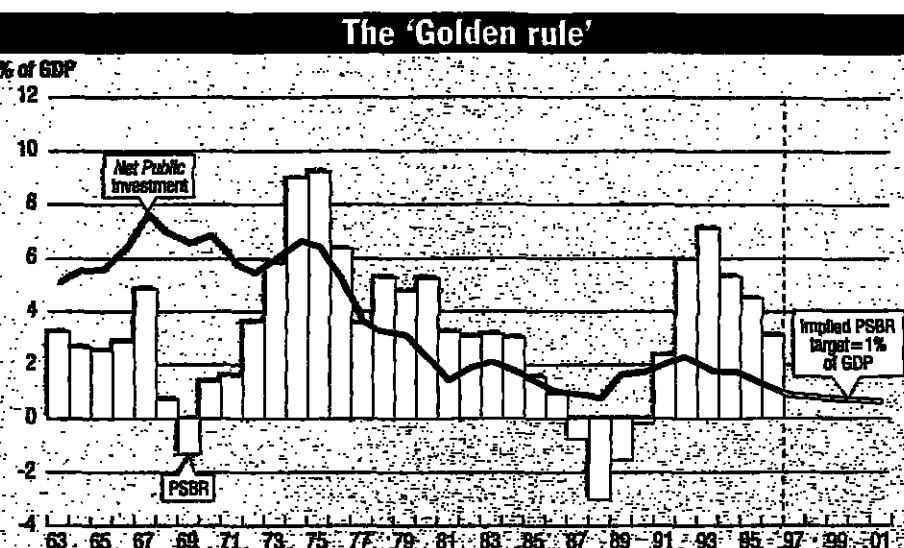
He said action was nevertheless needed to prevent the boom from getting dangerously out of hand. But higher interest rates would be more effective, with a one point increase doing the job of a tax increase of £8bn.

The IFS said how the Government acted on company taxation would provide a clear test of its commitment to business investment, recommending further consultation. Although a reduction in the tax credit pension funds receive against advance corporation tax would probably not have serious effects, any money raised ought to be returned to companies via a reduction in the corporation tax rate.

Stephen Bond, a researcher, called proposals for a lower rate of capital gains tax on long-term shareholding a "really silly idea" as it would have no impact on companies' investment decisions. The IFS also criticised the windfall tax as an unfair levy on current shareholders, as it has before.

But Mr Bond said it would be foolish for companies to challenge the tax in the courts because the impact of future regulatory changes could be far greater. "It would be a brave, or foolhardy, company that would try and sink the Government's flagship," he said.

The Green Budget highlighted pitfalls in some of the proposals for reform of the tax and benefit system. Mr Dilnot said that improving work incentives via the social security system would be expensive.



- The Green Budget: main points**
- Aim for PSBR equivalent to 1-1.5 per cent of GDP over the cycle, requires no net tax increases on top of inflation plans.
 - Windfall tax to raise £5bn in first two financial years, to be spent on welfare-to-work measures over next five years.
 - Four options for unemployed young people: £60 a week subsidy for a job, full-time training, voluntary work or local environment task force.
 - Possible reduction in rate of Advanced Corporation Tax raising £2bn-£4bn through cut in tax credit received by tax-exempt investors.
 - Possible abolition of phasing out of Maccs rising nearly £2bn a year.
 - Possible flat rates for the starting rate of income tax.
 - Discussion of benefit reform such as assured income tax credit.

Avonmore deal creates giant milk group

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Two of Ireland's largest dairy companies are to merge to create one of the world's five largest milk groups. Avonmore Foods has agreed a deal with rival Waterford Foods which values the company at £377m. The deal has been agreed by Waterford's board just weeks after it turned down a £281m offer from Avonmore.

If approved, the merger will create a company with £2.5bn of sales and a serious rival to the UK-based dairy groups such as Unigate, Northern Foods and Dairy Crest. The combined group will be called Avonmore Waterford and will account for more than 10 per cent of the UK liquid milk market. It will also have 20 per cent of the UK cheese market.

Directors of the two companies said the deal would enable the enlarged group to achieve greater economies of scale. Analysts expect the company to achieve annual cost savings of £20m.

Shares in Waterford Foods

soared 25p to 120p. Avonmore shares closed 7p higher at 225p.

One analyst said: "The dairy industry is ripe for consolidation. This could be the first of many much bigger deals which could involve UK companies."

Ross Buckland, chief executive of Unigate agreed saying the merger was "logical" and reflected the importance of size in competitive markets with low inflation. "We will have a bigger, better competitor. We wish them qualified success," he said.

The deal values each Waterford share at 142p, a 78 per cent premium to their closing price last Friday. Under the terms of the merger, shareholders in Waterford will receive 29 Avonmore shares for every 50 Waterford shares held.

However, the deal could still be blocked by the local co-operative groups of farmers who own 68 per cent of Waterford shares and more than 60 per cent of Avonmore's. The deal requires a 75 per cent majority of both sets of shareholders.

Investment column, page 22

Nissan's UK profits jump by 80 per cent

The UK operations of Nissan, the Japanese car giant, yesterday revealed an 80 per cent jump in profits despite heavy investment in the replacement for the Primera model, writes Chris Godsmark.

Nissan Motor Manufacturing (UK) made profits after tax of £18.2m in the year to the end of December, up from £10.4m in 1995, though earnings remained well below the peak of £29.3m in 1992. Nissan, the world's sixth largest vehicle maker, also said its world-wide market share had jumped to 10.1 per cent in the year to March, the black profit of £166.1bn reporting profits of £166.1bn (£875m), compared with losses of £488.4bn in 1995.

Last year's profits rise in the UK came after £250m of new

investment in the Primera, which helped boost production at the Sunderland plant to 231,000 cars in 1996, up from 215,000 the previous year.

"It was a heavy year in terms of expenditure at Sunderland but we still managed to increase profits," said a Nissan spokesman, who added that the company was on course to raise its production this year to 250,000 cars.

The investment also pushed Sunderland to the top of the European productivity league, taking just 10 hours to produce a new Primera, compared with 12.5 hours for the old model. The company is spending a further £70m preparing to produce an estate version of the Primera for the first time outside Japan.

IN BRIEF

US consumer confidence peaks

US consumer confidence surged to a 28-year high in May and home resales in April remained on a pace to top 4 million for the second consecutive year, causing concern that the slowdown in growth the Federal Reserve wanted to see may be late in arriving. Consumer confidence, boosted mainly by the buoyant jobs market, rose to a higher-than-expected 127.1 in May, the highest since 1969, the Conference Board said. April's index, meantime, was revised up to 118.5 from the previous estimate of 116.8. Economists had expected the May confidence index to rise to 117.0.

Unit trust sales hit record £2.1bn

Investors bought a record £2.13bn net worth of unit trusts last month, 72 per cent more than the previous peak of £1.24 bn in April 1996, the unit trust trade association, Autif, said. Net retail sales to private investors were also a new peak at £1.62bn, up 44 per cent on the previous high in April a year ago. Total funds invested in unit trusts reached a record £143bn. Net sales of personal equity plans also hit a record £1.62bn in April, up 42 per cent on the previous record in March and 50 per cent more than in April 1996. Total value of investments in PEPs reached a record £29.66bn. Sales of corporate bond PEPs set another high at £281m.

Russia and OECD sign co-operation pact

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development signed a co-operation pact with Russia at the annual meeting of ministers in Paris. The organisation said it would help Russia liberalise its economy, but set no target date for it to join the club of rich countries. Russia made a surprise formal membership bid at last year's meeting, but is far from meeting all the necessary requirements.

Separately, the OECD confirmed that it expected member countries' growth to average 2.5-3 per cent this year and next. It recommended further efforts to cut government budget deficits. The official communiqué urged a recognition of the benefits of globalisation and free trade, but in a gesture towards the French chair of the meeting, finance minister Jean Arthuis, said all groups in society must share in the economic benefits.

Research spending soars at Cambridge

Cambridge Antibody Technology unveiled a sharp rise in research and development spending with its maiden results. The company, which raised £41m from its flotation in March and which was a spin-off from the Medical Research Council (MRC), reported a rise in pre-tax losses from £580,000 to £6.7m for the six months to March 31. Cambridge said that around £5m of the loss related to the write-off of intellectual property after the group issued 750,000 to the MRC. The group's shares which listed at 500p were unchanged at 571.5p. The company, which has a handful of Nobel Laureates on its board, said it was on target to complete trials on an antibody for eye fibrosis by the end of this year.

Ashley's finance chief joins Oasis

Oasis Stores has appointed Dominic Lavelle as finance director with effect from 14 July. Mr Lavelle resigned last week as Laura Ashley's finance director for the UK and Europe. Mr Lavelle will succeed David Larson who has decided to leave Oasis to pursue other interests. The company said he had worked his notice period and would receive no compensation for loss of office.

Change of chair at Parity

Billy Carbutt is stepping down as non-executive chairman of Parity, the fast growing information technology company. Mr Carbutt, who has been chairman for three years, will be replaced by Parity's founder and current deputy chairman Philip Swinstead at the group's annual general meeting on 5 June. Mr Carbutt will stay on as one of the group's non-executive directors.

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£1173.83 inc.VAT

£999 Plus VAT

Product Code: 470

Features:

- 6866 PR-166+ processor manufactured by IBM
- 32Mb EDO RAM
- 16 Max CD-ROM drive
- 33.6 V34+ voice modem
- 2.25b hard disk
- 15" SVGA 0.28b screen
- 256K pipeline burst cache
- Fast 64-bit graphics using 2Mb system RAM
- 16-bit Stereo sound, joystick and premium mains powered speakers

MJN 166M

As above but with Intel Pentium 166MHz processor with MMX technology

£1291.99 inc. VAT (£1689 Plus VAT)

Product Code: 471

Features:

- Mid-tower case, (new look mid tower on Pentium II systems - not shown), 3.5" floppy drive, PS/2 mouse, 105 keyboard, software MPEG, mouse port, 2 fast world ports, parallel port, games port, Microsoft Windows 95 and missing mouse bundle.
- Epson Stylus color 220 720 X 720 dpi inkjet printer £298.65 inc. VAT (£318 Plus VAT)

15" to 17" Upgrade: £2285 inc. VAT extra (£2300 Plus VAT)

MJN - The Award Winning PC Manufacturer

MJN 200+

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£1189 Plus VAT

Product Code: 472

Features:

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- 512K pipeline burst cache
- 32Mb EDO RAM
- 32Mb EDO RAM
- 33.6 V34+ voice modem
- 16 Max CD-ROM drive
- 15" SVGA 0.28b screen (17" optional)
- ATI Rage II 3D graphics with 4Mb SGRAM
- SoundBlaster 32 hardware
- Waveable sound card, joystick & premium mains powered speakers

MJN 200M

As above but with Intel Pentium 200MHz processor with MMX technology

£1543.83 inc. VAT (£1839 Plus VAT)

Product Code: 473

Features:

- Intel Pentium II 233MHz processor with MMX Technology
- 512K pipeline burst cache
- Intel ATX motherboard with DIM
- 32Mb EDO RAM
- 3.2 Gb EIDE hard disk
- 24 Max CD-ROM drive
- 15" SVGA 0.28b screen (17" option - see below)
- ATI Rage II 3D graphics with 4Mb SGRAM
- 33.6 V34+ voice modem
- Yamaha high quality 3D stereo sound with software waveable, premium mains speaker system and PC joystick

MJN 233-2

£1878.83 inc.VAT

£1599 Plus VAT

Product Code: 510

Features:

- Intel Pentium II 233MHz processor with MMX Technology
- 512K pipeline burst cache
- Intel ATX motherboard with DIM
- 32Mb EDO RAM
- 6.4 Gb EIDE hard disk
- 24 Max CD-ROM drive
- 17" SVGA 0.28b screen
- ATI Rage II 3D graphics with 4Mb SGRAM & TV-out
- ATI PC-TV tuner with Teletext and video capture
- 33.6 V34+ voice modem
- Yamaha high quality 3D stereo sound with software waveable, premium mains speaker system and PC joystick

MJN 266-2

£2701.33 inc.VAT

£2299 Plus VAT

Product Code: 511

Features:

- Intel Pentium II 266MHz processor with MMX Technology
- 512K pipeline burst cache
- Intel ATX motherboard with DIM
- 64Mb EDO RAM
- 6.4 Gb EIDE hard disk
- 24 Max CD-ROM drive
- 17" SVGA 0.28b screen
- ATI Rage II 3D graphics with 4Mb SGRAM & TV-out
- ATI PC-TV tuner with Teletext and video capture
- 33.6 V34+ voice modem
- Yamaha high quality 3D stereo sound with software waveable, premium mains speaker system and PC joystick

All Models Include:

- Mid-tower case, (new look mid tower on Pentium II systems - not shown), 3.5" floppy drive, PS/2 mouse, 105 keyboard, software MPEG, mouse port, 2 fast world ports, parallel port, games port, Microsoft Windows 95 and missing mouse bundle.
- Epson Stylus color 220 720 X 720 dpi inkjet printer £298.65 inc. VAT (£318 Plus VAT)

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business

Computer services group crashes

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Shareholders in Wakebourne, the west London computer services group, stand to see the value of their investment wiped out completely after the company announced yesterday that it had gone into administrative receivership with debts of almost £10m.

Last night receivers from accountants Ernst & Young said they could announce a sale of the company's main trading business, Wakebourne Group, as early as today. Jason Elles, joint administrative-receiver, explained: "I would hope in the next day or so there'll be an announcement. It could be the whole business or several separate sales. After all, we've been working over the weekend on this."

Mr Elles was referring to the final confusion in Wakebourne's 13-year history. Ernst & Young were called in by the Bank of Scotland late into last Thursday

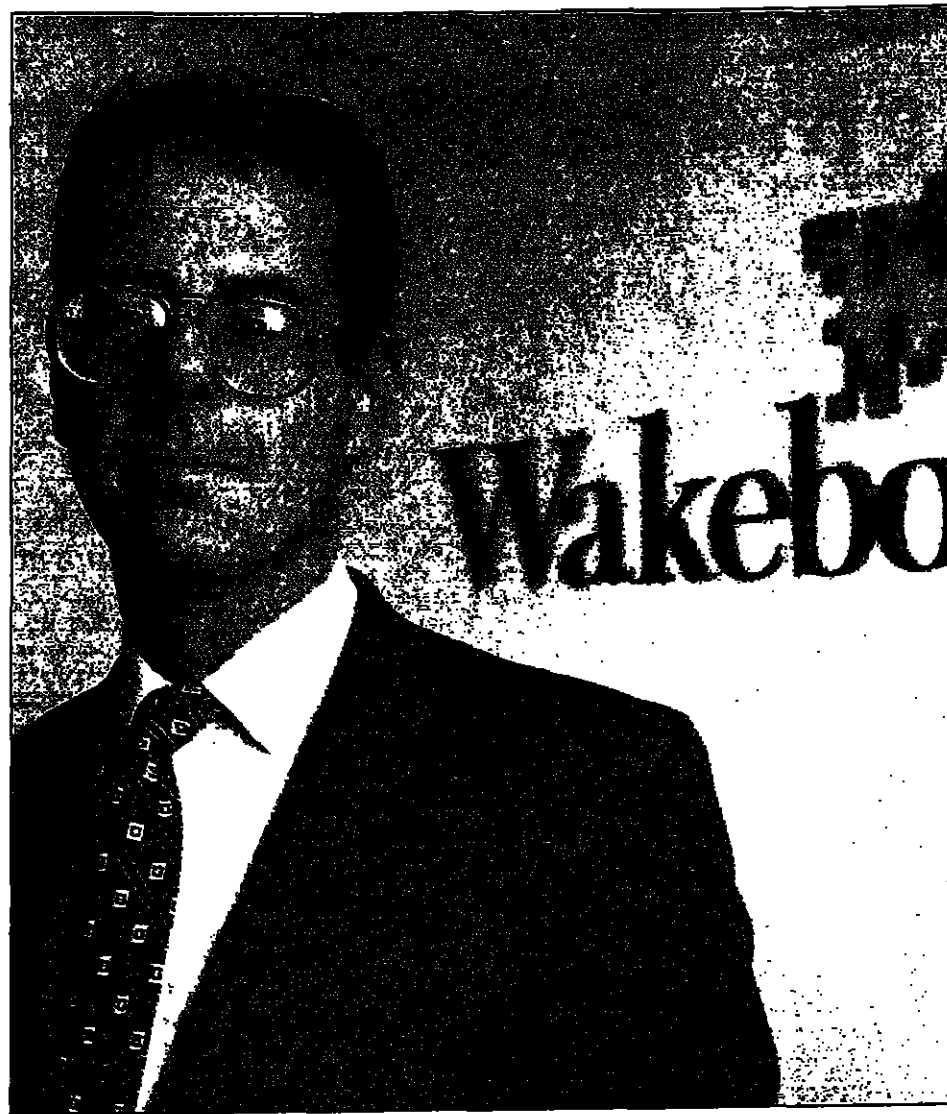
night, with the intention that the company would inform the stock exchange on Friday.

However, Wakebourne's brokers, Hoare Govett, were apparently unable to complete the procedure in time and had to wait until yesterday to make formal the statement.

The shares had been suspended since 12 May after the company announced it was in "advanced discussions" which may lead to an offer at a price "substantially below" the current level of 10.5p, valuing the group at just £2.4m.

Mr Elles said ordinary creditors were also unlikely to emerge with any cash from the sell-off, after the Bank of Scotland and other lenders received their share. He added: "The problem the group had was a burden of debt they could never get rid of. They tried to trade out of it but failed to increase their customer base sufficiently."

Yesterday Wakebourne's 300 staff, many based at its headquarters at Hanworth near



Leslie Warman: Had insisted that remedial action was being taken

Heathrow Airport, were told to carry on as normal pending the sale of the company. The company had a variety of activities, including maintaining computer systems and installing cables for clients, which include several large City of London financial groups.

Shareholders had become increasingly frustrated, despite a brief revival in the share price in 1994 on hopes of a dividend. Trading deteriorated last year, with losses of £3.38m after exceptional costs of £2.37m.

Neither Mr Warman nor Frank Emerson, the chief executive, could be contacted yesterday.

Gremlin sets out its stall to double profits

Cathy Newman

Gremlin Interactive, the computer and video games software company, is aiming to double its profits within two years of coming to market this summer.

The company, which is expected to be valued at between £45m and £55m, is seeking a full listing on the London Stock Exchange in July. Gremlin hopes the move will multiply profits by enabling it to use the flotation proceeds to fund an increase in the number of games it releases each year from six to around 15.

Profits for the nine months to the end of April were £2.5m, achieved from sales of more than £11m.

Ian Stewart, joint chief executive, said the flotation would also allow the company to continue on the acquisition trail at the same time as developing its products. He said: "We'd grown everything organically up to this point. The flotation does give us the opportunity to sustain our continual growth, to fund the development of the acquisitions we've already put in place, and to allow staff to own part of the company."

Gremlin has been active on the acquisition front in the past year, with the purchase of Dreamweavers, a video games outfit, last December, and DMA Design, a software development company, two months ago. Mr Stewart said he hoped to look at other software developers before the year was out.

The flotation will see the creation of around 25 jobs in the Sheffield head office within the next 12 months, according to Mr Stewart. Mr Stewart started Gremlin with his wife Jenny 11 years ago. They will between them retain 40 per cent of the group's shares.

Julian Morse, analyst at Beeson Gregory, the stockbroker firm that is handling the flotation, said Gremlin had benefited from rising penetration of Personal Computers in the home. He added that the company had managed to upstage some of its competitors by developing games for a variety of different platforms, including PCs, Sony PlayStation and Nintendo 64.

Gremlin's best-selling games are Premier Manager 97 and Actua Soccer, both of which were released within the last five weeks.

Small is still beautiful for biotech companies coming to market

A rising tide of young biotechnology companies is planning to float on the UK stock market over the next few years - undeterred by Celltech's shock revelation last week that its leading drug for septic shock works no better than a sugar pill.

The crash in Celltech's shares will undoubtedly affect investor sentiment, which is vital for stock market debuts. Patrick Rousseau, CEO of Thallia, a French health food company hoping for a £100m (£61m) float says: "I have heard of six IPOs [initial public offerings] due this summer now delaying until the autumn after Celltech."

But behind these delays, a huge queue of hopefuls is building up. Michael Ward, editor of biotechnology newsletter *BioBusiness*, estimates there are 700 European biotechnology companies looking to raise public money over the next decade. Of the UK companies seeking to float in London, three - Powderject, Ethical Holdings and Galen - announced valuation details before Celltech's bombshell.

Waiting in the wings are Oxford Glycosciences, which recently appointed James Noble, former finance director of British Biotech, to its board, chemical designer Oxford Asymmetry, Cambridge-based Cencis, gene-therapy group Therasys and cancer specialist, Antisoma.

Even more are eyeing up the UK from the Continent. Jeremy Curmuck Cook, head of Rothschild's biotechnology investment fund, sees enormous growth in biotechnology in Europe. "These companies are 10 years behind the US in commercialising their research, but are now ready to raise serious money," Finance dominates this list which includes Biocom, a computer software group, IDM, a gene-therapy company;

Celltech's recent setback has not cured firms' enthusiasm for public listings, reports Sameena Ahmad

Cerep, a chemical screening specialist; gene-delivery company, Transgene, and drug delivery group, Biovector Therapeutics. Coming from Germany are Morphosys, which has developed a peptide antibody library and IDEC, which hopes to list on AIM. Brussels is offering IBT, Spain, Pharmamar, which makes drugs from marine plants and from Australia the agricultural genetic engineer, ForBio, is looking for a secondary listing this year. Pharming, the Dutch company which was planning a London summer listing, may now delay until the autumn, say sources.

Mr Ward of *BioBusiness* also

notes a new trend for US-listed biotech to seek a secondary quotation on the less crowded European markets. "Some of these US companies don't get much exposure at home where there are 300 plus biotech. The UK has just 20 or so. Also many have subsidiaries on the Continent and so it is natural to seek more investors there," Sugan, which has a German base and is 20 per cent owned by Zeneca, plans to float in London late summer while US compatriot, Verigen, which has a Danish subsidiary, will list on AIM.

How many of these hopefuls will actually make it? Though say or do is scrutinised. Drugs die all the time within the big pharmaceutical companies, but investors never know about it.

The complexity of biotechnology companies is partly to blame for the collective panic in share prices after bad news from one company. Robert Atkinson Maguire of Barings Brothers says: "It is precisely because pharmaceutical companies are very complex and very different that people tend to judge them as the same." The small size of the UK biotech market is also critical. Dr Horrobin says: "There is still a lack of qualified analysts and jour-

nalists here. If people don't understand the technology, it is easy for them to become wildly enthusiastic or overly negative."

However, that is changing. As Mr Curmuck Cook notes: "A bigger market attracts more money, institutions have to take a position and more analysts start to follow the sector seriously." This results in a keener ability to differentiate companies on quality. Louis Nisbet, chief executive of Xenova, the recently floated UK group, says: "Institutions are becoming very clued up and are starting to recruit medically qualified fund managers." The realisation that biotech is worth a serious look is also being driven by the growing number of alliances with big pharma groups eager to find innovative new products.

In addition, as Mark Brewer, analyst at Hoare Govett, points out, not all biotech carry equal risk: "Not every company develops drugs from scratch. There is plenty in this sector for investors with a lower appetite for risk." Of the imminent floats, Galen is a mini-pharma company profitable for 30 years. Powderject doesn't make drugs at all but develops devices to deliver them. None has plans to scale back their flotation valuations post Celltech.

Nor should investors forget the potential for biotech to rise from the dead. Canab's shares, which crashed to little over 100p in 1995 after a lead drug failed, now trade at 917.5p. British Biotech, which lost its first cancer drug batimastat, is now capitalised at almost £1.7bn. As Dr Horrobin points out: "Any one who invested in biotech at flotation have done much better than if they'd put the money in big drug company shares. We are all pretty successful investments."

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMAD

A dairy deal worth co-operating with

With more than 40 dairy companies in Ireland and literally hundreds in the UK, it is scarcely surprising that analysts have been expecting consolidation in this fragmented industry for some time. Yesterday's proposed merger between Avonmore Foods and Waterford Foods will create an Irish giant to rival Unigate and Northern Foods and could well spark a wave of further merger and takeover activity. The industry has long been afflicted by over-capacity and pressure on prices exerted by the large supermarket groups.

For the two companies concerned, a merger has been a long time coming. Avonmore, the larger of the two, first proposed a deal in 1991 but found its terms rejected. Another approach was made last month valuing Waterford at Ir£281m but that offer was turned down too.

Now the boards have agreed a Ir£377m deal though it still faces a serious hurdle. The merger needs to be approved by 75 per cent majority of the Waterford Co-op, which controls 68 per cent of its shares, and by a similar majority of the Avonmore Co-op members, who also own over 60 per cent of the company.

But the benefits of this deal are clear enough. Brought together, Avonmore Waterford will have sales of some Ir£2.5bn. It would be the UK's fourth-largest producer of liquid milk and have 20 per cent of the UK cheese market. There should be significant synergy, with analysts talking about potential cost-cutting of 1.2 per cent.

Shareholders in Waterford Foods ought to be delighted with this offer. The shares have been a poor investment and collapsed in March following a profits warning caused by delays in the company's rationalisation of its Irish milk business. Days later it announced it has also breached its bank covenants. From their March low of 73p, the shares have been rising following Avonmore's initial approach. But the proposed 142p per share offer still represents a 78 per cent premium to their 110p close last Friday.

For investors in Avonmore the picture is not so clear cut. Avonmore, which also has businesses in food ingredients, meat products, and animal foodstuffs, has been performing strongly of late

with its shares rising from doubling since the start of last year. But investors should benefit from the economies of scale. And with analysts forecasting Waterford profits of around £25m this year, the deal means Avonmore is paying a forward multiple of less than 12 times earnings for Waterford, which seems justified given the potential cost-savings.

The Co-op farmers have turned their back on deals like these before, but with the industry becoming ever more competitive this one should be accepted.

Healthy policy at Care UK

Care UK is a rarity in the nursing home sector. While traditional operators have built large nursing homes and hoped local authorities stump up the funds to fill beds, Care UK has focused instead on winning fixed-term contracts from health authorities. Avoiding the local authority market has been smart. As local authority funds have dried up, conventional nursing homes have taken longer to fill, squeezing profits and forcing some operators out of the sector.

Care UK has bucked the trend. Underlying pre-tax profits for the six months to March rose 16 per cent to £1.9m on £12.4m sales, up 26 per cent. Earnings and dividends per share rose 21 per cent.

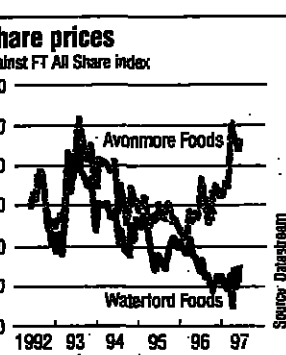
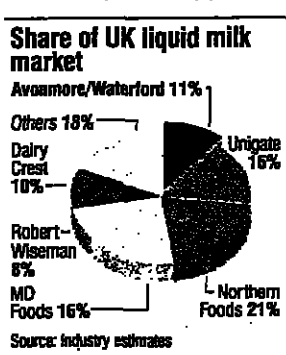
The emphasis on fixed term contracts in Care UK's business means its all-important occupancy levels are way above the sector - the group does not typically build a home until it has a contract to fill it. And with around four fifths of its 1,000-odd beds contracted and a third under contract until 2006, revenues look secure. Care UK's close relationship with health authorities is crucial too - its contract win rate is good and it is picking up unusual business - like a private finance initiative deal to run a cottage hospital in partnership with Stonehaven NHS Trust. With only a handful of the UK's 132 health authorities tendering there is plenty to go for.

Care UK is also addressing the one weakness of contract work - the patchiness of income. Richard Clough, chief executive, is planning acquisitions in specialist markets this year - learning disability, challenging behaviour and psychiatric care - which should smooth earnings growth. The group is not looking at bids for quoted companies, but with gearing of just 19 per cent and £20m of bank borrowing facilities, it has muscle to snap up a number of private operators. Broker Collins Stewart forecasts 1997 profits of £4.15m. With the shares unchanged at 118p yesterday, they trade on a rating of 15 times this year's earnings. That is fair and the group is starting to look good value on 11 times next year.

Avonmore Foods and Waterford Foods: At a glance

Combined market value: Ir£730m
Avonmore share price 225p Waterford share price 120p

1996 trading record	Avonmore	Waterford	Combined
Sales (Ir£bn)	1.3	1.04	2.34
Pre-tax profits (Ir£m)	36.5	19.8	56.3
Earnings per share (p)	17.19	6.3	
Dividend per share (p)	4.5	3.2	



Continental assets pay for McLeod

McLeod Russel, the air filtration and surface coatings group, has maintained consistent progress in the six months to the end of March. Pre-tax profits rose 13 per cent to £4.2m, despite exchange rate losses on the 40 per cent of its profits earned abroad.

Turnover rose less than 2 per cent to £55.9m, but its operating profits were 15 per cent up at £4.8m. Net interest costs increased by a quarter to £571,000 and the tax charge rose from 25 per cent to 28 per cent. Earnings per share rose by a modest 7 per cent to 5.08p.

Air filters again produced faster growth in turnover and profits, compared to surface

coatings, which includes Bancrofts, the Birmingham-based industrial-paint suppliers.

The group's residual environmental engineering and industrial property sides shrank in absolute and relative terms to less than 10 per cent of the whole. Last year's filter company acquisitions in Germany and France contributed £300,000 and surface coatings has begun to improve profitability in a generally static marketplace.

Turnover and profits both grew faster on the Continent than in the UK and contributed 27 per cent of sales by origin and 43 per cent of profits in the period. James Leek, McLeod's chairman,

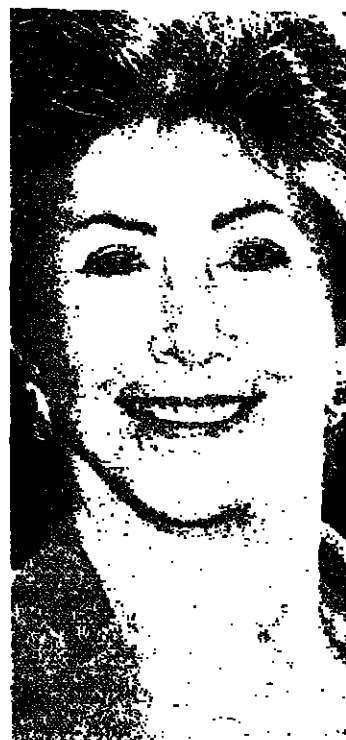
expects great things from technology transfers between operating companies and is looking at further acquisitions in the filtration side of the business.

The strength of sterling cost £200,000 in the first half and is set to reduce the second half by a further £300,000. But air filtration is growing 2 per cent faster than GDP, and Ben Thefaut at Albert E Sharp is keeping the company on course for £11m of profits and 13.1p of earnings per share this year, rising to £12.5m and 14.7p next year.

The group's shares rose 1.5p to 150p, valuing them on an undemanding 11.5 times this year's earnings and 10.2 times 1998 earnings.

And now, here's a business text that we prepared earlier

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Valerie Singleton: Getting down to talking about business

We all know that Valerie Singleton has a way with youth and, of course, with sticky-back plastic. Now the veteran broadcaster is turning her *Blue Peter* experience to good effect by teaming up with another Beeb stalwart, Peter Hobday, for a series of "talking books" by the "top business guru" Ron Holland, designed to encourage more young people to start their own businesses. Mr Hobday will be reading such texts as the best-selling *Talk and Grow Rich*, *Turbo Success* and *Debt Free with Financial Kung-Fu*, while Singleton will take part in presentations with the author. "We are focusing on young people who are looking to start their own business. These young people are the future of Britain and need all the help they can get," explains Singleton. All together - "here's a business plan I prepared earlier..."

Meanwhile, whoever said that business school students were all financial control freaks without an ounce of imagination had better eat their hat. Just ask Peter Casey, chairman of the Casey construction group. Faced with finding a "green" use for 2 million tons of peat that his com-

pany was going to dig out of the ground during the building of the M66 at Ashton Moss, he went to Manchester Business School, which runs an annual creative thinking challenge among its MBA students.

Thanks to the lateral thinking encouraged by creativity professor, Tudor Rickards, the peat looks to be heading to a golf course in the Middle East. But in the competition, sponsored by accountants Arthur Andersen; their associated law firm, Garretts; insurance brokers and risk management consultants J&H Marsh & McLennan and Manchester Airport, the students also came up with other ideas, such as processing the peat for cat litter and using it as a sound barrier at the edge of a motorway.

Nikko Europe's new managing director and joint head of research, Simon Briscoe, launched into his new role with an admirable display of dedication yesterday. For although they only got spiced at the weekend, Mr Briscoe and his bride,

Marie-Laure Duhot, were both back at their desks yesterday morning. He has been promoted from his previous position as UK economist and head of fixed income research. He will head a new integrated research division alongside Larry Prager.

Meanwhile, Ms Duhot, formerly a high-flier at the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg, has started at the capital markets division of Lehman Brothers. The honeymoon had to take place before the wedding, since she is the pressures on dual-career couples in the City.

Given the pre-election takeover mania from the US for British regional electricity companies it was only a matter of time before a senior UK executive went west, literally, with his new masters. Norman Askew, chief executive of East Midlands Electricity, had already been appointed an executive vice president of Dominion Resources, which recently paid £1.3bn for the Nottingham-based group in an agreed deal.

Now Mr Askew, who is 54, is to be the next president and chief executive of Virginia Power, Dominion's main subsidiary and a genuine first in the privatised power industry. East Midlands' finance director, Robert Davies, 48, is taking over as chief executive. Mr Askew is reputed to have hit it off from the start of negotiations with Thomas Capps, Dominion's larger-than-life chairman.

Yesterday's announcement ominously noted that Mr Askew, who has run East Midlands for three years, is "familiar with American customs and cultures," having worked in the US for three years. Perhaps he is getting out at the right time. One thing he won't have to cope with is the dreaded windfall tax, hanging over every regional power company as judgment day approaches in the Gordon Brown's Budget.

High-profile biotechnology analyst Nick Woolf has been poached from Japanese broking house Nomura by

US investment bank, Robertson Stephens. Mr Woolf will become Robertson's first biotechnology analyst in Europe. Robertson, a private bank based in New York and San Francisco, focuses on high technology and biotechnology companies in the US, but is eager to extend its coverage to the fast-expanding European biotechnology sector.

Mr Woolf's appointment is a further pointer to growing investment opportunities in the biotechnology market in Europe. An increasing number of companies across the Continent are seeking to raise money on the London or new pan-European Easdaq stock markets.

He will initially be advising Robertson's US clients on investing in Europe, but the bank wants to build a European client-list offering investment opportunities in US and European equities.

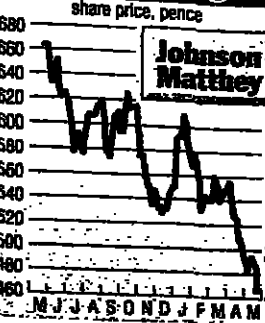
Referring to last week's share price falls after UK group Celltech said that its leading drug had failed clinical trials, Mr Woolf said that when European share prices were weak, Robertson could provide companies a ready alternative route to market via Nasdaq, the US's technology exchange.

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FTSE 100	4681.6	+19.8
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FTSE 350	2265.6	+7.9
SEAQ VOLUME	607.5m shares	
46,074 bargains		
Gifts Index	95.87	-0.10

Share spotlight



Failed placing takes the shine off Johnson Matthey

Taking Stock

As blue chips edged back towards their peak Johnson Matthey, the metals group, lost 15.5p to 465.5p, lowest for three years. A failed attempt to place a large line of stock and rumours a sell circular was about to appear did the damage.

The shares have been in a ragged retreat for the past year. A year ago they were riding high at 663p. Then the premium rating began to disappear.

Mildly disappointing interim figures piled on the agony, prompting some analysts to pull back their year's forecasts to around £105m, against the £96.1m produced last time.

The group is a casualty of sterling's strength. But with its catalytic converter in the fashionable area of reducing exhaust emissions and hopes of riding high for its electronics materials business, Johnson's fall from grace has surprised some observers.

Year's figures are due soon and the sinking shares suggest acute disappointment is on the horizon.

Footsie ended up 19.8 points at 4,681.6 just 12.3 points off its closing peak. In relatively thin trading financials were again the pace setters as the market continued to anticipate the arrival of Halifax next week and later this month.

Norwich Union, Financials filled the top seven places on the blue-chip leader board with insurance group Legal & General to the fore with an 18p gain to 481p.

Abbey ended 12p higher at 944.5p after touching 950p and Alliance & Leicester sawed from a 13p gain to end with a 10.5p fall at 627.5p.

National Westminster Bank missed out, falling 5.5p to 785.5p over worries about a reported link with City Mortgage Corporation, a US lender under investigation. Sun Life &



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

Provincial, said to be eyeing Equity & Law, gave up 8.5p to 314.5p.

Zeneca was another to experience a topsy-turvy day as Roche, the Swiss group, took over a German operation, seemingly ruling out the long rumoured strike at the drugs group. At one time down 31p, the shares rallied to close just 2p lower at 1,876.5p with many of the supporters of the takeover story content to exchange Roche for Glaxo Wellcome as the rumoured predator.

The surprise swing in the French elections was seen as reducing the likelihood of any significant British involvement in the French defence industry,

lowering British Aerospace 15p to 1,239.5p and General Electric Co 4p to 354p.

Rolls-Royce dived 8p to 242.5p as the Cathay Pacific airline grounded its A330-300 fleet because of problems with its Rolls Trent 700 engines. British Airways, said to be in talks to buy Alitalia, fell 14.5p to 711p.

Some football shares had that "sick as a parrot" look. Sheffield Utd's failure to clinch promotion to the Premiership prompted a 20p fall to 45p; the price topped 100p in February, and Southampton's managerial vacuum lowered the shares 11p to 91.5p (against a 151.5p peak). Silver Shield, the wind-

screen franchise group, put on 0.75p to 3.5p on talk it was planning a deal involving Swansea City.

Imperial Chemical Industries firmed 4.5p to 798.5p as Salomon Brothers suggested a 12-month target of 900p but BTR, the hard-pressed conglomerate, had another uncomfortable session, falling 8p to 209p, a 12 month low.

Boots, reported to be planning a £400m share buy-back or special dividend, added 12p to 725p. A signalled share buy-back at EMI failed to overcome disappointing figures and the shares finished 48.5p down at 1,172.5p.

BBA, the engineering group, came in for a speculative run, ending 8.5p higher at 329.5p. American Express Services was another said to be a predator's strike list, gaining 10p to 162.6p.

Shell jumped 20p to 1,209.5p, largely on hopes any Government tinkering with

ACT would not hit its dividends because of the need to retain the payment relationship with the group's Dutch side. Among the oil tiddlers Emerald Energy confirmed it had been awarded extra exploration acreage in Colombia. The shares firmed 0.25p to 5.25p.

Celltech's sceptic shock drug disappointment continued to weigh on the shares, off 13.5p to 334p. Interim figures are due today. Cortec International put on 4.5p to 217p as Nomura said buy with analyst Nick Woolf producing a 420p target.

The Savoy Hotel low-voting "A" shares stretched 15p to a 1,597.5p as speculation continued that Granada was near to clinching a deal with the Wootton family which controls the group through the powerful "B" shares.

A favourable trading statement lifted watch maker Dailywin 11p to 79.5p.

Fortune Oil's cash call is now likely in the next two months. It wants to raise £25m to help finance its intriguing joint venture in China, supplying aviation fuel at 16 airports. Fortune, which has 11 petrol stations in China, is looking for other UK investors to join in China. There are no plans to give up its London share listing. ABN Amro Hoare Govett forecasts profits moving from £4.7m this year to £6.9m. The shares are 14p.

Middlesex Holdings, the metals group run by Masoud Alkhami, is switching stockbroker, from Hichens Harrison to ABN Amro Hoare Govett. ABN Amro is one of the advisers to Gazprom, the Russian oil giant, which also consults Mr Alkhami. Middlesex shares are 8.25p.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: r Ex rights; Ex dividend; Ex all; u Unlisted Securities Market; S Suspended; p Partly Paid; m M Paid; S Shares; A All; Stock

The Independent Index

The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange Simply dial 081 223 333 and when prompted to do so enter the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 081 223 333 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

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Anyone with a tone-dial telephone can use this service. For a detailed description of the Independent Index, including its portfolio facility, phone 081 223 333. For assistance, call our helpline 071 873 4378 (800am - 500pm).

Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

Share	Volume	Share	Volume	Share	Volume	Share	Volume
British	100000	Shell	100000	Woolworth	100000	Woolworth	100000
BT	100000	Glaxo Wellcome	100000	Woolworth	100000	Woolworth	100000
BT	100000	Rolls Royce	100000	NFC	100000	NFC	100000
Lloyds TSB	100000	Cardinal	100000	Woolworth	100000	Woolworth	100000
Woolworth	100000	BT	100000	Woolworth	100000	Woolworth	100000

FTSE 100 Index hour by hour

Open 4651.2 down 0.6	11.00 4682.0 up 25.2	14.00 4680.0 up 24.2
09.00 4678.5 up 14.0	12.00 4679.5 up 17.8	16.00 4678.0 up 17.3
10.00 4681.0 up 23.2	13.00 4680.0 up 27.3	Close 4681.0 up 28.8

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Foreign Exchange Rates										D-MARK
STERLING					DOLLAR					Spot
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months		Spot	1 month	3 months			
US	1.6289	10.40	28.26		1.000	30.29	89.84		0.9378	
Canada	2.2479	65.40	181.73		1.3201	39.12	118.12		1.0000	
Germany	2.2710	79.73	241.29		1.7012	39.29	118.12		3.3735	
France	1.6470	29.234	736.70		5.7388	119.14	330.338		966.039	
Italy	2.7322	12.10	40.28		18.777	119.14	330.338		96.5448	
Japan	198.83	10.10	3104.30		1.4188	14.15	47.43		20.8390	
Belgium	1.4216	29.18	90.44		35.110	6.54	24.81		3.8001	
Denmark	167.189	18.19	90.44		0.4788	12.07	39.040		1.1247	
Netherlands	10.2535	220.230	330.00		1.9133	42.40	130.124		1.1247	
Switzerland	3.1164	89.82	271.229		1.5705	8.5	15.105		0.3882	
Spain	1.0704	3.2	12.4		7.0285	18.5	105.10		84.3635	
Italy	1.251	29.180	90.440		14.33	10.6	34.8		1.0000	
Sweden	233.71	11.1	69.61		1.6489	106.81	328.276		4.4868	
South Africa	12.481	240.190	760.440		1.4180	90.47	149.143		0.7636	
Portugal	2.3087	9.0	30.20		1.3052	3.5	4.6		4.5903	
Spain	2.1325	9.3	30.20		7.7428	21.24	62.66		1.4738	
Hong Kong	12.609	80.39	194.137		2.414	1.4775	7.9		0.0528	
Australia	4.1006	0.4	0.4		3.7598	18.15	60.85		2.5947	
New Zealand	2.2575	0.0	0.0						3.8791	
Saudi Arabia	0.02	0.0	0.0							
Singapore	2.3386	0.0	0.0							
OTHER SPOT RATES										
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Country	Spot	1 month
Argentina	1.6289	0.899		Nigeria	0.182	1.5	85.400	Kenya	0.0278	
Brazil	19.0228	11.3732		Pakistan	0.0578	0.6	43.938	Malaysia	0.3850	
Chile	1.7480	0.899		Philippines	49.002	26.385	263.200	Thailand	0.2600	
Colombia	13.0307	6.2516		Portugal	118.22	17.190	33.000	Turkey	3.6406	
Egypt	5.5384	3.4209		Russia	5.9387			United States	1.0000	
France	1.2542	2.0000		Saudi Arabia	0.02	4.4774				
Ghana	391.0	200.00		South Africa	7.224	78.395	27.890			
India	443.73	272.350		UAE	5.8942	3.8791				
Indonesia	80.3439	0.0222								
Israel	1.4923	0.0222								
Note: Forward rates shown here are as at discount (advance) on spot rates; those quoted here are based on a premium price for spot rates. *Other rates quoted as non-deliverable. For the latest London exchange rates call 0201 122 3000. Cable cost 80p per minute (plus 40p other charges).										
Tourist Rates										
£ Buy					£ Buy					
Australia (Dollars)	2.0790				France (Francs)	6.5590				2.2870
Austria (Schillings)	35.2000				Germany (DM)	2.3650				11.2480
Belgium (Francs)	20.3360				Greece (Drachmas)	423.5000				336.2000
Canada (Dollars)	2.2000				Hong Kong (Dollars)	1.0000				253.2000
Denmark (Krone)	0.1360				India					

UNIT TRUST GUIDE

d	ex dividend
e	exit charge applicable
	when units are sold
buy	formerly 'offer'
sell	formerly 'bid'
x	Non SIB recognised fund

5.55 Katak	HYPERION
6.20 Mr Bombastique	7.20 Perfect Call
6.50 Walk The Beat	7.50 Tamara
	8.20 Golden Hades

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BENSON AND HEDGES CUP: Warwickshire ambushed but Surrey, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire triumph

Kent lifted to victory by Walker

Cricket

DAVID LLEWELLYN
reports from Canterbury
Warwickshire 304-8
Kent 306-6
Kent win by 4 wickets

A match of two fine innings, a couple of crucial injuries, three umpires and a whole heap of runs was also given a liberal dose of drama, as Kent achieved the rare distinction of batting second and scoring more than 300 runs to win a Benson and Hedges Cup tie.

Twice the umpires called for their own third man, Trevor Jesty, to adjudicate for run-outs during the Kent chase. Matthew Fleming was not given the benefit of the doubt, but Graham Cowdrey, much later on, was.

In four meetings Warwickshire have yet to beat them on the field, their only triumph over Kent coming three years ago in a bowl-out in the indoor school at Edgbaston. They must be wondering what they have to do to overcome Kent out in the middle, especially after Neil Smith had blasted his way to a magnificent century after Warwickshire had opted to bat.

When they took the field things went wrong from the start. Allan Donald, Warwickshire's South African fast bowler, sent down 13 wides in his opening over, and then, at the end of his second in which he bowled another one, pulled up with a back injury. But Warwickshire did not roll over. Not even when it became clear that wicketkeeper Keith Piper was limping.

Kent, though, proved unstoppable. They countered Smith's century with an equally fine hundred by the chunky Matthew Walker. He has been

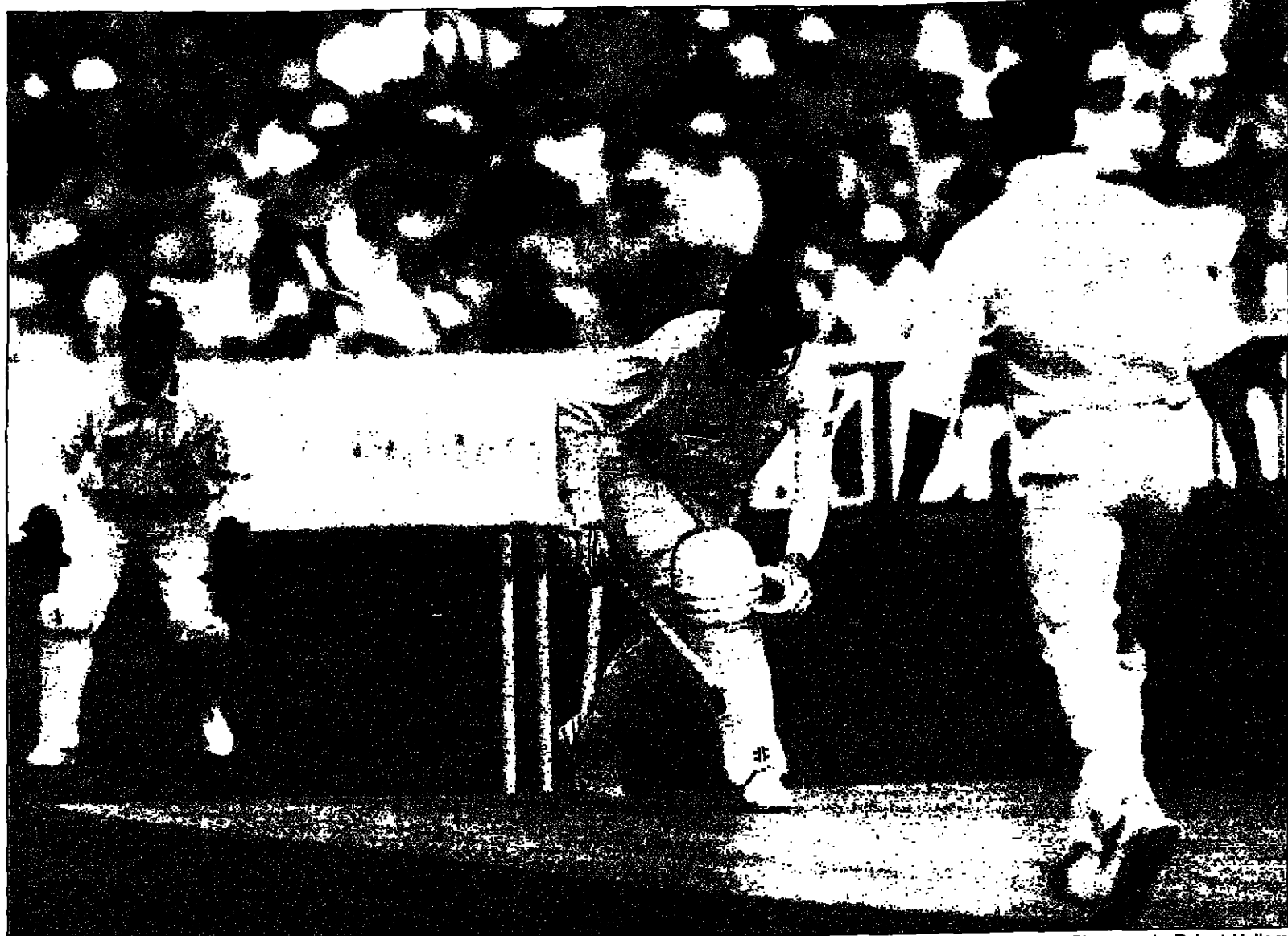
in blisteringly good form in one-day cricket in general and this competition in particular. He has now passed fifty in four out of five B&H innings this summer, this one by far his best, and he picked up the Gold Award for it.

Walker's innings was crammed with cultured strokes, clean cuts and devastating drives. His placement at times was breathtaking in its precision, and his certitude at the crease for the three hours he was there was wonderfully uplifting for the Kent supporters. His fall brought anguished groans from the home crowd. He played around an Ashley Giles delivery and was bowled for a career best 117, having launched three sixes and smacked a dozen other boundaries.

But the Kent innings, far from losing its momentum, picked up as if anything as Cowdrey (39 not out) and Mark Ealham upped the pace and, although Kent lost the England man, Cowdrey saw them home.

Smith's hundred had been altogether more brutal but no less pleasurable to watch. Like Walker, he had been in at the start and, like the diminutive Kent batsman, it was a career best in the competition. He too faced 119 deliveries and also hit three sixes, but he managed one more four and eight more runs.

Like Walker, he proved impossible to contain. He was seeing the ball early, the fielders were picking it up late. By the time he did fall trying to hit Ealham out of the ground, Warwickshire were well on their way to a daunting total. Fleming did hoover up four useful wickets and Ealham a couple but, like their opponents later in the day, Kent found it difficult to contain the runs on an extremely good batting wicket.



Surrey's Adam Holloake clean bowls Mark Ilett of Essex during Surrey's six-wicket win at Chelmsford yesterday

Photograph: Robert Hallam

Holloake upstaged by Brown

HENRY BLOFIELD

Essex 214
Surrey 215-4
Surrey win by 6 wickets

Even the Essex supporters will have wanted to catch a glimpse of the Holloake brothers at the crease, provided they were tactful enough to make it brief. What they had to stomach was 26 overs of Alistair Brown, whose 71 in 71 balls made sure that it was Surrey and not Essex who go through to the semi-finals.

The scene was set for sterling

deeds. Mr and Mrs Holloake, fast becoming the most famous parents of the year, were at Chelmsford and lunched with John Major, who will surely do no worse than runner-up in the Prime Minister of the Year competition.

The ground was full and Essex, after being put into bat on a pitch which gave the seamers some movement, were guilty of careless batting.

Stuart Law, who had opened the innings and begun with four cracking fours, may have been unlucky with one from Martin Bicknell - the best of the bowlers - which lifted and

flicked the edge of his bat. The others had less excuse.

Then came the Holloakes. The first part of the story went quietly enough when Ben bowled six reasonably tidy overs at brisk medium pace which cost 28 runs. Things bottled up later when the ball was thrown to Adam. His first ball, a long hop, was whisked by Robert Rollins straight to Ian Salisbury at mid-on.

The Holloakes both have a superb cricketing talent and it may be that another of their attributes is that they are lucky cricketers. For good measure Adam took a second wicket with

the last ball of his first over when Mark Ilett was bowled trying to play him to leg. He took 2 for 6 in two overs just to make sure the Holloake flame was still alight.

Surrey then lost Alec Stewart in the second over of their innings, caught at short mid-wicket off a mistimed drive. This made way for Ben Holloake, who produced a short but sumptuous feast of four fours in 10 balls.

In the next over, with that lovely flowing arc of the bat, he drove Ashley Cowan wide of mid-on for four. Then he turned his attention to Ilett. A glorious

on-drive was followed by a straight drive off a slower ball and then one on his legs was flicked neatly away to square leg for the third four of the over.

It was too good to be true - then he tried to play Cowan to leg off his pad and was bowled. It was as if Laurence Olivier had been cut off in mid-sentence.

But Brown is never anticlimactic and his dashing stroke-play was splendid, while Graham Thorpe, who was dropped three times, helped in a third-wicket stand of 110 in 133 balls and then stayed on with Mark Butcher to see Surrey almost home.

Millns makes Somerset suffer

DEREK PRINGLE

reports from Leicester
Leicestershire 197
Somerset 177
Leicestershire win by 20 runs

The Leicestershire huddle was back with a vengeance yesterday as Somerset tumbled to defeat in the quarter-finals of the Benson and Hedges Cup on a used pitch that offered plenty to the bowlers but little certainty to the batsmen. It was a state of affairs superbly exploited by David Millns, whose inspired opening spell of 3 for 36 stopped the visitors' reply in its tracks after the home side had been bowled out for 197.

It should have been less, but after having their opponents reeling at 14 for 3, Somerset then contrived to drop three catches, two of them by Richard

Harden at first slip. As two of those chances came from the bat of James Whitaker - the game's highest scorer - when he was on three and 23. "The culprit," as Judge Jeffreys might have said before placing the noose, "stands guilty before you." He was not granted a reprieve after batting either. Millns removing him lbw for a duck.

There were three wickets too for Alan Mullally, though the last one, Andy Caddick, caught down the leg-side for 38, was far more crucial than the first two, as the fast bowler threatened to put Somerset back in contention with a 60-run partnership for the eighth wicket with Rob Turner.

It was Caddick's highest score in the competition, and although it will be his bowling that England may be looking to when the Ashes gets under way, two heartily struck sixes

and a brace of cover drives proved he is no fool with the bat.

What intrigued many howevers, was Somerset's decision to field first with three spinners in their side. Mind you, their coach, Dermot Reeve, has made a playing career out of being contrary, although batting last on a patchy pitch clearly at its best last Sunday - when Surrey's Alistair Brown scored an unbeaten 157 - defied even Reeve's warped logic.

Indeed sanity did not much prevail among the batsmen of either side, and only Ben Smith with 57 played with the required amount of application, as he and Whitaker, with a more flamboyant and fortunate 61 to his name, added 102 in 22 overs for the fourth wicket.

Aftab Habib, unbeaten on 43 when Caddick removed the last man Matthew Brinson, also batted well, a fact only fully

appreciated when Somerset had plunged to 115 for 8.

As in the Leicestershire innings, it was a parlous situation largely of their own doing. Simon Ecclestone and Mark Lathwell both dragged-on and Michael Burns edged one he did well to reach.

Unluckily of all, however, must have been Graham Rose, who took the first three wickets of the day. He was caught at mid-wicket off Vince Wells, after Millns, the Gold Award winner, drifted out of position.

The Sussex pace bowler Jason Lewry hopes to get the go-ahead to resume training in early June, four months after he underwent surgery on a stress fracture in his lower back. The 26-year-old left-arm is working towards being fit for the match against the champions, Leicestershire, at Eastbourne in 10 weeks' time.

JON CULLEY

reports from Headingley
Yorkshire 253-9
Northamptonshire 254-3
Northants win by 7 wickets

David Capel, who made 97 in a losing cause when these sides met in the Benson and Hedges final 10 years ago, exacted revenge yesterday with a superb demonstration of his enduring versatility as Northamptonshire claimed a place in the semi-finals.

The veteran former England all-rounder took a career-best 5 for 51 as Yorkshire were restricted to 253 for 9 and then launched his side's winning reply with a splendidly bold 67 off just 59 balls, comprehensively upstaging Darren Gough and Chris Silverwood, the two current England bowlers on whom the home side's hopes were pinned.

Rob Bailey, another experienced hand, put together an unhurried, unbeaten 70 to guide his side home with four overs to spare but there was only one candidate for the Gold Award.

Capel took four of his wickets in nine balls as the middle fell out of Yorkshire's innings. Then, pausing only for a bite of lunch, he returned to crack two sixes and nine fours as he and Richard Montgomery, very much the junior partner, put on 90 in just 16 overs. Capel gave just one chance, when Richard Stemp spilled a catch that had seemed to be safely in his grasp at third man. The error cost 14 runs.

Having been asked to bat on a grey morning, Yorkshire were indebted to Michael Vaughan (85) for salvaging a respectable total. He and Darren Lehmann put on 69 for the second wicket after the early failure of David Byas, and a face-saving

sixth-wicket partnership of 115 with Bradley Parker (58).

Prior to Parker's arrival, Yorkshire's progress had been brought to a shuddering halt by Capel, his first three wickets coming in four deliveries. He struck first to dismiss Lehmann, who chased a wide ball outside off stump. Anthony McGrath went for the next delivery and Craig White, having survived the hat-trick ball, drove the next straight into the hands of cover.

More drama followed in Capel's next over, in which Vaughan, then on 36, required treatment for a blow on a finger, which must still have been throbbing when Richard Blakey was caught at second slip as Yorkshire collapsed from 81 for 1 to 89 for 5. Capel claimed his first five-wicket haul in the competition when Peter Hartley mis-hooked and David Ripley held a steeppling catch.

Waugh come to tourists' rescue

Australia 249
Gloucestershire 55-1

The twins Steve and Mark Waugh proved their well-being but the rest of the Australians signalled their continuing lack of form at Bristol, where Gloucestershire bowled them out in two sessions for 249.

In the two hours to the close, Gloucestershire then made 55 for 1, losing Tony Wright leg before to the South Australian Jason Gillespie, who collected his 100th first-class wicket.

The tourists, whose Ashes challenge starts next week, were looking for a long batting day to tune up after their Texaco whitewash. However, their captain Mark Taylor, more in need of runs than anyone in the party, went in first and came back without even a single to his name.

Although short of genuine pace, the left-arm Mike Smith moved the ball well away from the left-hander, and the uncertain Taylor edged the fourth ball to give the diving Jack Russell the first of his three catches in the opening six overs.

Russell, who later snared a stumping victim and conceded no byes, sent the watching chairman of selectors, David Graveney, the message that he is in form.

Just six runs apiece, meanwhile, for Matt Elliott and Justin Langer left the Waugh brothers to stitch the innings together. They did so with some purposeful batting, putting on 96 in 29 overs, before Mark Waugh drove the left-arm spinner Richard Davis to Smith at mid-on. His 66 off 101 balls included 14 boundaries.

His brother hit a similar number of boundaries but then played outside the line to Smith to depart eighth short of his hundred, off 136 deliveries.

There was a little movement off the pitch, but it was always a typical, low, slow Bristol wicket. Bolstered by their early successes, the home bowlers were difficult to get away.

The young pace bowler Jon Lewis, drafted into Gloucestershire side at the last minute, took 4 for 89.

Smith, a Test hopeful, was sparingly used and returned 2 for 26, while the off-spinner Martyn Ball came on late to take the last three wickets. They cost him 56 in 17.4 overs. Australia's last five wickets fell for just 44.

■ Sri Lanka yesterday won the four-nation Independence Cup in Calcutta after defeating Pakistan by 85 runs in a match that saw fortunes swinging, but the world champions kept the lid firmly closed to win the best-of-three series 2-0. Chasing a victory target of 310 in 50 overs, Pakistan were all out for 224 in 43.1 overs. Pakistan were unable to recover from a bad start, when both the opening batsmen Shahid Afridi and Saeed Anwar were back in the pavilion with the score on 34. Saeed, the holder of the highest individual limited-over score of 194, scored against India last week, disappointed his new fans when he was out for six.

CRICKET SCOREBOARD

Benson and Hedges Cup Quarter-finals

One-day matches

Essex v Surrey

CHELMSFORD: Surrey won by six wickets.

Surrey won toss

Essex

Surrey

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Stretched Saints on the rack

Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

St Helens are today holding a crisis meeting aimed at strengthening a squad that is becoming increasingly frayed at the edges. Saints, reeling in the aftermath of their record 65-12 home defeat by Wigan on Monday, have had further bad news, with the Great Britain hooker, Keiron Cunningham, needing an exploratory knee operation this week. Chris Joynt needs to see a specialist about his shoulder and will also meet the club with his representatives next week over what St Helens' chief executive, David Howes, called "a

number of internal matters that are concerning him".

Howes would not comment on rumours of strife between Joynt and the club's captain, Bobbie Goulding, but, even if everyone were getting on well, Saints' resources are strained to the limit. "We will be sitting down with the coaching staff and assessing what can be done," Howes said yesterday. There is little point in sitting down unless money can be made available, with Warrington's Toa Kohu-Lowe likely to be the first purchase if the purse-strings are loosened.

Uncertainty surrounds the future of Paul Sigsworth after the arrival of his fellow-Australian Peter Walsh to take up a new

Detroit reach final in flying fashion

Ice hockey

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Solheim Cup set for Sunningdale

Golf

ANDY FARRELL

Sunningdale will celebrate its centenary in the year 2000 by hosting the Solheim Cup match between Europe and America. The news should ensure a quality field from the States when the Westbury British Women's Open in August is played on the classic heathland Surrey course, the scene of the 1987 Walker Cup.

"Sunningdale is a venue associated the world over with quality and steeped in golfing tradition, and will provide the perfect showcase for the best

professional women golfers from both sides of the Atlantic," said Terry Coates, the chief executive of the women's European tour.

The biennial event will be at the Muirfield course in Dublin, Ohio, in 1998 and at Interlachen, Minnesota, in 2002. Sweden, who provided four members of the European team which lost to the United States at St Pierre last year, had hoped to host the tournament in 2000. "They will be disappointed, but will definitely be in the running for 2004," Coates said.

After 45,000 spectators over three days went to South Wales last September, Coates said the event may have to be all-ticket.

The date will also have to be moved to August or October as its traditional week clashes with the Sydney Olympics.

The announcement came as a relief to Coates, who two weeks ago suffered a stormy AGM when his No 2, Gill Wilson, walked out of the meeting after receiving abuse from some players. Wilson has returned as a media consultant, while Coates will continue for two years. His main concern is to retain American Express as the tour's sponsor.

Colin Montgomerie has withdrawn from this week's Tournament Players Championship in Hamburg starting on Thursday "for personal reasons".

from a 6-0 loss in Denver in the fifth game, outshot Colorado in the first period 14-3. But Patrick Roy kept the Wings from scoring. He stopped Viacheslav Fetisov's blast from just inside the blue line 90 seconds into the contest. He also got a glove on Shanahan's wrist from the low slot with 3:30 to go and smothered Steve Yzerman's wrist shot with just under two minutes left.

The Avalanche finally had a scoring chance early in the second period, but Mike Vernon turned aside Valeri Kamenisky's wrist.

Detroit finally beat Roy 3:29 into this period when Lapointe hopped off the bench, took a pass from Igor Larionov and hit a slap shot which tipped into the net off the heel of Roy's glove. Roy, however, kept it a one-goal game by stopping Lapointe's backhand with 5:32 remaining. Detroit kept up the pressure early in the third period and Fedorov put home his own rebound for his third goal of the series and a 2-0 lead. The Avalanche replied with 5:12 remaining. Vernon stopped Adam Deadmarsh's shot from the left circle, but was helpless as Young scored his fourth play-off goal on the rebound.

It was all too late for Colorado and it was left to Shanahan to put the game and the series beyond them in the dying seconds.

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Dampener put on the Lions' Border skirmish

Rugby Union

CHRIS HEWITT
reports from East London

Some guys get all the luck. Last Saturday, the weather gods granted the Lions perfect conditions for the opening match of their South African tour and, on the fast going in Port Elizabeth, a handful of tourists - Jeremy Guscott, Will Greenwood and

Scott Quinnell in particular - grabbed the opportunity to lay down their Test markers. By contrast, today's line-up might just as well be playing on a wet Wednesday in Wolverhampton. Both literally and metaphorically, it is sink or swim time for some very big names indeed.

Border here is in a serious danger of being played on a swamp rather than a rugby pitch and, as a result, the second-up Lions will find it more difficult to im-

press. As Scott Gibbs, the powerful Swansea centre who partners his countryman, Allan Bateman, in midfield admitted: "We'll have to go some to emulate the performances we saw from Will and Jerry against Eastern Province. Will turned in a terrific display and Jerry is on fire at every training session. The competition is intense."

Whether Border, among the less formidable obstacles on this tour, can bring some external intensity to bear today remains to be seen. They have endured a rotten time of late; so much so that their best-known player, the Springbok full-back Russell Bennett, said with startling candour yesterday: "The fact that we haven't played for a month is no great disadvantage because it was getting to the stage where playing was doing us no good at all."

If Bennett does not expect the current Border side to beat the Lions, as their forerunners did in 1955, he at least anticipates a sharp upturn in performance levels, personally and collectively. "Some of our team will play a game like this only once in their careers, so there will be no shortage of effort. As for myself, I very definitely have Test ambitions. I haven't had much exposure recently because I haven't been involved in Super 12, so this is a really big occasion, a chance to remind people of what I can do," he said.

Paul Grayson, the England outside-half who has not played since early March because of muscle problems in his kicking leg, came through yesterday's low-key training run without further problems. "It's been a long three months and the thought did flash across my mind that I might not even make it on to the plane," he said. "Everything has turned around brilliantly for me over the last week, though, and the game can't come quickly enough for me."

Sadly for Grayson's Northampton club-mate, Tim Rodber, the frustration is set to continue. The England No 8 had been due to sit on the bench today and, with the Lions looking to use all their substitutes if at all possible, he would have been virtually certain of a first rumble in the famous red jersey. But it became clear yesterday that the eye would be picked up on Monday would not stand up to match demands, so Simon Shaw moves up to replace him.

Ashley denied lucrative pay-day

Bosling

Crawford Ashley's reputation has cost him a lucrative pay-day against the legendary Thomas "Hitman" Hearn in Las Vegas next month.

Ashley, the British and European light-heavyweight champion, would have picked up \$100,000 (£62,000) for fighting the former six-weight world champion on 7 June, but Emanuel Steward, the American's former manager, advised him against taking the bout.

Hearn is now self-managed but still turns to Steward, whose training methods have revived the career of the World Boxing Council heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis, for advice.

"Many know all about Crawford and he told Hearn he was too dangerous to tangle with," Frank Maloney, Ashley's promoter, said.

Now the Leeds-based Ashley will make a much shorter trip to Alfordville, outside Paris, to defend his European title against the Frenchman Pascal Wauzelot on Saturday.

Hearn is not the only fighter to turn down Ashley. The Welshman Nicky Piper, whom Ashley beat for the British title in November 1994, has declined to meet him for the European championship, while Mark Prince, from London, has forfeited his right to challenge for the British crown.

Despite being unbeaten for the last two years, Ashley is no longer rated in the top 12 by the World Boxing Organisation. Ashley's No 2 ranking has gone to the Dutchman, Eddy Smulders, who gave up the European title rather than fight the Yorkshireman. To add insult to injury, Piper is the No 1, with Prince in third spot.

The WBO's somewhat illogical findings have prompted Maloney to fax their championship committee, asking them to reassess the situation, especially as, since the last ratings were published, Ashley knocked out the Spaniard, Roberto Dominguez, in three rounds for the European title.

A nonplussed Ashley said: "Boxing politics have denied me a world-title chance. Boxers should prove themselves in the ring. Now no one wants to fight anyone on the top 10."

Maloney added: "Crawford is not getting any younger - he was 33 last week - but he is getting frozen out. We even offered Chris Eubank £350,000 to fight him, but he turned us down."

"If we keep getting rejected, we will consider moving Crawford up to heavyweight to fight for the vacant British title."

TODAY'S NUMBER 9m

The amount that was wiped off the value of Sheffield United shares - a fall of 31 per cent - when the Stock Exchange opened yesterday, following the club's failure to reach the Premiership after losing the First Division play-off final on Monday.

Rangers reveal European plans

Football

Rangers yesterday unveiled the blueprint drafted to prepare the perennial Scottish champions for the expected advent of a European League by the year 2000.

Their manager Walter Smith and his assistant, Archie Knox, have signed three-year extensions to their Ibrox contracts. Smith has also recruited the Dane Tommy Moller-Nielsen, the 34-year-old son of the former Danish international manager Richard, as first-team coach to replace Dave Dodds.

The chairman, David Murray, revealed the backroom appointment is just the start of a new signing spree which will include a new training facility and, possibly, no fewer than nine new players by July.

Murray confirmed his desire to consign "nine-in-a-row" to the history books, saying he and Smith had resorted to "short-termism" in recent seasons in order to equal Celtic's cherished record of nine successive Scottish titles.

Now they crave making a bigger impact on Europe - even though they must walk a qualifying round tightrope for the Champions' League in July. Failure would mean an exit before the Premier Division has begun.

Asked if he expects a European League to run alongside domestic football within the next three years, Murray said: "It is happening already. It is called the Champions' League."

"I've said repeatedly that by the year 2000 we will have all three European trophies combined into one. It is starting to happen already. We must be ready for that. It is all very well saying we are a big club. It is quite another going and doing it. We all know what is required."

"I do believe the parochial element of 'nine-in-a-row' has held us back over the past couple of seasons. 'Ten-in-a-row' will take care of itself. We'll either win it or we won't but dramatic change has to come."

Rangers have spent £50m over the past eight years to redevelop Ibrox into a futuristic 50,000 all-seater stadium, but now the emphasis is on changing the playing staff. Richard Gough and David Robertson have gone and Smith has already lined up the Swedish international midfielder Jonas Thern from Roma, the Australian full-back Tony Vidmar from NAC Breda and the German goalkeeper Georg Koch from Dusseldorf.

More will surely follow with Rangers having confirmed their interest in Internazionale's defenders Massimo Paganini and Alessandro Pistone. Roy Hodgson's departure from Inter is delaying decisions on their futures.

But Murray will not split big-money fees on people like Paul Ince and Kenneth Anderson who are, at 30, deemed too old for the Ibrox vision.

Paul Gascoigne, though, could be part of the future - if he accepts an offer to stay.

"We admit that in the past we have gone for the quick fix in the transfer market," said Murray. "Now we are putting the building blocks in place by signing players of the right age on four to five-year contracts. We could have as many as nine new players by the start of the season."

"We need to do it. We were vulnerable there for a few months last season but shrewd management and extra effort from a couple of players saw us through."

Smith's deal confirms he is in with the bricks at Ibrox, after first arriving 11 years ago to become assistant to Graeme Souness. Knox joined from Manchester United in 1991 to become Smith's No 2.

United in hunt for Desailly

ALAN NIXON

Manchester United have entered the race for Milan's powerful defender Marcel Desailly. The Frenchman is considering a move and sources in Italy claim his representatives have spoken to United and Barcelona.

Alex Ferguson, the United manager, sees Desailly as a replacement for the injury-tormented Gary Pallister. Desailly is to decide on his next move in the next fortnight and has also to receive final contract offers from both clubs, which is in United's favour as they plan to conclude the chase for Juninho shortly.

The signs are that Atletico Madrid will offer in excess of £10m for the Brazilian, a figure United may match, leaving the final decision to the player. If Juninho goes abroad, Ferguson will step up his push for Desailly.

Eyal Berkovitch is planning to leave Southampton following Graeme Souness's departure and is to have talks with West Ham and Crystal Palace.

Franz Beckenbauer, Germany's former coach and captain, has made a fierce attack on England for running a rival bid against Germany to host the 2006 World Cup. "The English have left us in the lurch. We expected the English to support us. This has got nothing to do with English fair play," he said yesterday. "The English themselves are OK, but the Football

Association has to look at whether it is in order."

Following Beckenbauer's outburst, Bertie Vogts, the German coach, called on England to withdraw their bid, saying: "If I was the Prime Minister of Britain I would tell the FA to withdraw. If they have any character they will pull out. All the countries in Europe think that."

Everton have moved closer to leaving Goodison Park after supporters voted overwhelmingly in favour of moving to a new 60,000 all-seater stadium.

The club ran a poll in the match programme on the final day of the season asking supporters whether they would consider a move to a new stadium on the outskirts of Liverpool. Almost 84 per cent of the 21,974 fans who replied said that they were in favour of chairman Peter Johnson's plans for the new stadium.

Wolves will block any move from Reading to talk their assistant manager, Colin Lee, about a return to Elm Park to take the vacant manager's job. Lee said: "I have assured the club that I will do things properly and not walk out. Unless I am given permission to talk to Reading I will be staying with Wolves."

The Stoke goalkeeper, Mark Prudhoe, has turned down a new deal because he is fed up waiting for the club to name a new manager. Grimsby and Plymouth are both keen to secure his signature.

John Scales (right) and Ian Wright look on as Alan Shearer puts in some shooting practice ahead of England's World Cup qualifier against Poland on Saturday

Photograph: PA

Juventus chase unique hat-trick

Juventus, who have just secured the Italian title to add to the World Club Cup and European Supercup, could crown their centenary year with the most sought-after club prize of all tonight by winning the European Cup in Munich.

No Italian team has won a similar grand slam in one season, and for Marcello Lippi's side to do that against Borussia Dortmund would simply confirm what is already beyond any doubt - that Juventus are currently the best club side in the world.

Victory would totally vindicate Lippi's decision last year to jettison the heart of the team which had beaten Ajax on penalties to become European champions for the first time in 11 years only a few weeks previously.

Within a week of that final Gianluigi Viali had left for Chelsea, and soon afterwards

Fabrizio Ravanelli had followed him to England and a season of unrelenting drama at Middlesbrough. The defenders Pietro Vierchowod and Paulo Sousa - ironically sold to Borussia - were gone soon after that. In their place came the Croat Alen Boksic, Uruguay's Paolo Montero, the Frenchman Zinedine Zidane and two Italians, Christian Vieri and Nicola Amoruso.

A real indication of how far Juventus have progressed came in the semi-final of this season's competition against Ajax. In last season's final Juventus played Ajax but could only draw 1-1 and had to settle for an unsatisfying victory on penalties. Last month Juventus beat Ajax 2-1 away and 4-1 at home, a defeat that prompted the Ajax defender Frank de Boer to say: "I have no doubt Juventus

will win in Munich. They are like a team from another planet."

There have been other examples of Juve's devastating cross-cross attacking play this season. At the start of the year they demolished Paris St-Germain 9-2 on aggregate in the European Supercup, which included a 6-1 away win in Paris. Then on 6 April came an unprecedented 6-1 win over Milan - in Milan. It was Milan's heaviest defeat in their 98-year history and, if nothing else had been achieved this season, that result would have been enough.

But although Lippi's side start as overwhelming favourites to defeat Dortmund and retain the trophy, they are taking absolutely nothing for granted against a squad containing five former Juve players.

Dortmund have made steady if unspectacular progress to the final but, with players such as the European Footballer of the Year Matthias Sammer and experienced internationals Jürgen Kohler, Stefan Reuter, Andreas Möller, Stéphane Chapuisat of Switzerland and Karlheinz Riedle in their squad, they will be no pushovers.

Ronaldo agrees improved contract with Barcelona

ELIZABETH NASH

reports from Madrid

Want to buy "the finest young footballer on earth"? That will cost you £50m, plus, of course, the small matter of his annual salary of £2.5m upwards.

A number of clubs were interested in signing the 20-year-

old Ronaldo, Barcelona's dazzling Brazilian who attracted the superlative description from the club's coach, Bobby Robson, but yesterday he and his advisers agreed a new contract with the Spanish club that runs until 2006.

He has a starting salary of 500m ptas (£2.5m) a year, which is twice his current wage and will rise in line with the retail prices.

Ronaldo can expect to earn 800m ptas a year (£4m) by 2005. The contract contains an escape clause. Barcelona think that if a club offered £50m, Ronaldo could go, but that fee, too, is index linked.

The announcement of the contract by the Barca president, Josep Nuñez, concluded two days of talks with the player's three Brazilian representatives, who will take a 10 per cent cut. The deal makes 20-year-old Ronaldo football's biggest earner. "I hope this contract lasts its term, and we won't have to renegotiate it in two years' time," Nuñez said, "because my heart couldn't stand the strain."

Ronaldo has scored a record 34 goals in the Spanish league this season, putting Barca within two points of the league leaders, their arch-rivals Real Madrid, and helped the club to win the European Cup-Winners' Cup.

Nuñez conceded the need to seek extra sponsorship money to help defray the cost of keeping Ronaldo, who also has a £1m a year contract with Nike to wear their boots.

Athletics

Debbie Lewis, the only British woman to win a medal at the Olympics last year, will prepare for the World Championships by competing in the Götzis invitational in Austria on 31 May. Lewis, the 34-year-old, won a silver medal in the 1996 Atlanta Games, and is the world No 1 in the 48kg weight class.

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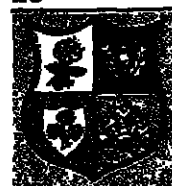
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Border skirmish

Chris Hewett on today's second match of the Lions' tour, page 27

sport

Kent's unlikely triumph
All the Benson and Hedges Cup quarter-final action, page 26

Gascoigne lift does not offset loss of Adams

GLENN MOORE

Football Correspondent

There was a time when Paul Gascoigne would have been distraught at the thought of Tony Adams missing his birthday party, such a noted liquid trencherman would have been a valuable addition.

Things have changed, hopefully permanently for Adams, probably temporarily for Gascoigne, and Gazza's disappointment at Adams missing

last night's 30th birthday bash was as a footballer and a friend, not a fellow tippler.

While Gazza was given a welcome present with the news that his calf, though fattened by Linda Ruthelze's attentions, was probably recovering quickly enough to allow him to play against Poland on Saturday, Adams will not be there. He failed a fitness test on his troublesome ankle and was sent home to rest for the summer.

There are two thoughts to be drawn from this rapid response.

It confirms the seriousness of an injury which, if aggravated, could threaten Adams' career just as it is enjoying an Indian summer. That Hoddle should still have given the Arsenal skipper this long to try and prove his fitness reveals England's need of him. Saturday's match will require men of bravery, ability and experience, and few meet those requirements as well as Adams.

One who comes close is Paul Ince and Hoddle was thus perturbed to discover that the Internazionale midfielder picked

up a knee injury playing against Napoli at the weekend. He is not ruled out, but is a doubt.

With one captain out, and another doubtful, Hoddle was relieved that Gascoigne, an inspirer if not a leader of men, was recovering. Indeed, Gascoigne felt so jovial he was even prepared to share 20 minutes of his birthday with the press.

Not that he was in generous mood. The press, he said, could force him into retirement and had been responsible for him ceasing to enjoy the game.

"Glenn Hoddle talked about my needing to be in love with the game and I agree. I was just turning up, wanting to win and get the 90 minutes over. I was not enjoying it because the press never gave me a chance. I was always getting hammered."

"I used to go on the pitch worrying about having to do this or that - beat three men, score a goal - or I'd be slaughtered. Now I get slaughtered, however I play, so I may as well go out and enjoy it. I started enjoying the game with the testimonial

matches I played. I asked David Buss if I could play in his. I have enjoyed my career, if someone said 'would you turn the clock back 10 years if you could' I would say no."

For one who claims not to read the papers any more, Gascoigne seemed aware of recent critical comment. "If I keep getting hammered I might retire. I'll play as long as I'm happy, when I think I've had enough I'll do what's best for me," he added.

It has been suggested Gascoigne might retire after the

World Cup, when he will be 31, but he would not be drawn. As to his Rangers' contract, he said: "I have a year to go. I have told them I am concentrating on England. We will talk about it when I get back but they want me to stay."

Returning to his main theme, Gascoigne added: "A lot of players do things outside football but none of them get photographers up their arse, hassling their wife and blinding their kids with flashguns."

Gascoigne has a justified

point but he is not alone. David Beckham was clandestinely pictured with his girlfriend, Victoria (Posh Spice), in the tabloids yesterday. And Beckham did not sell his wedding pictures to *Hello!* or take part in a self-publicising fly-on-the-wall documentary.

And the birthday? Gascoigne's only comment, in reference to last year's high jinks in Hong Kong, was: "I've had my teeth done, so I won't need the dentist's chair."

More football, page 27

Henman spurns a winning position

Tennis

JOHN ROBERTS

reports from Roland Garros

Although one game alone lasted longer than it takes to thread all those beads in Venus Williams's hair, Tim Henman's adventure on the clay courts of the French Open was as brief as most observers feared.

Henman and Jim Courier were among those who departed the championships yesterday, both having lost in five sets in the opening round. Henman was the No 14 seed, Courier an unseeded twice former champion.

Their respective status underlines how much progress Henman has made in a short time - the British No 1 was defeated by Courier in the final of the ATP Tour event in Qatar at the beginning of the year - but their results had a similar hollow ring.

Goran Ivanisevic, the No 4 seed, also joined the exodus, but his defeat by Sweden's Magnus Gustafsson, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5, 6-3, was another example of the Croat's propensity for handicapping his talent with confused tactics.

Courier, a winner at the Stade Roland Garros here in 1991 and 1992, had hoped his form on clay courts en route to Paris would lead to an improvement on his recent Grand Slam record. But defeat by Sweden's Magnus Larsson, 6-1, 6-2, 4-6, 1-6, 6-4, means that the American has now lost in the

first round of two of his last three major championships.

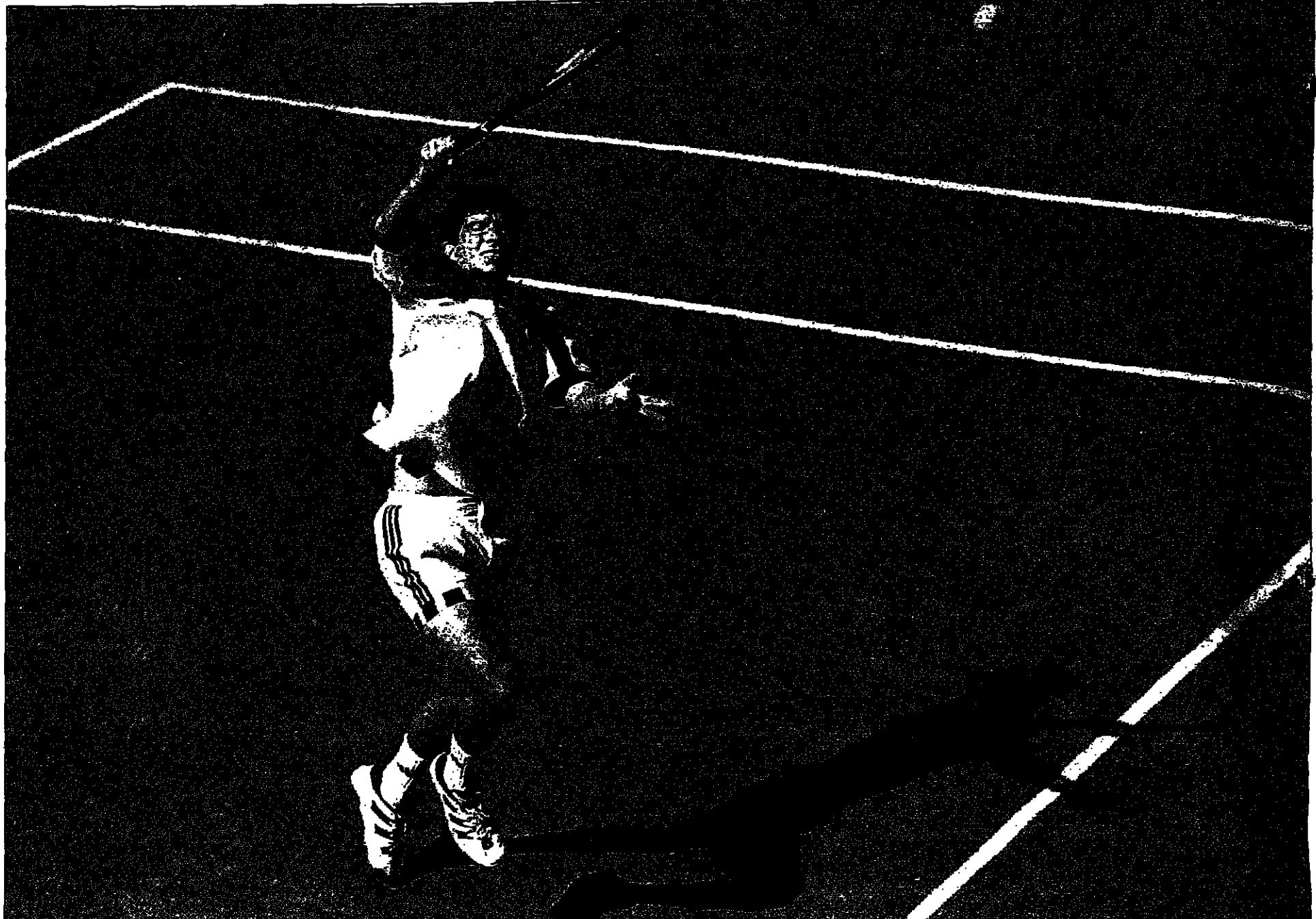
In Henman's case, the disappointment stemmed from the fact that he seemed to have the beating of his French opponent, Olivier Delaite, only to fade in what proved to be the two most crucial games of the contest. Delaite, a wild card entry ranked No 143 in the world, won, 6-2, 2-6, 1-6, 6-2, 6-4.

Having recovered after losing the opening set to lead by two sets to one, Henman looked far more confident than Delaite. In fact, Greg Rusedski, the British No 2, a first-round loser in five sets on Monday, decided to leave the match and prepare for his return to London when Henman was leading 4-1 in the third set. "Trust me, this is over," Rusedski said, "C'est fini."

Delaite did not think so, demonstrating that he was not as discouraged as he looked. He broke Henman's serve in the opening game of the fourth set, and was not put off when the 22-year-old from Oxford immediately broke back for 1-1.

It took 26 minutes to decide the next game, as Henman's serve was put under severe pressure by both his opponent and himself. They duelled through 13 deuces. Henman saving five break points but unable to convert any of eight game points - double-faulting to squander one - before being lobbed by Delaite on the sixth break point.

The Frenchman went on to level the match, but then



Duel in the sun: Tim Henman heads for defeat against Olivier Delaite in the first round of the French Open yesterday

Photograph: Mike Hewitt/Allsport

brought further problems on himself by losing the first three points on his serve in the second game of the final set. Henman failed to take advantage, and allowed two further break points to slip in the same game.

Henman compounded that by double-faulting on break point to lose serve at 4-4, pounding both deliveries long. Delaite served the match out to love af-

ter three hours and 35 minutes.

It was not long ago that we were bemoaning the fact that British men were unable to gain a place in the main draw of the singles at the French championships, so we should endeavour to be philosophical about the latest results. At least Henman and Rusedski lasted five sets before having to seek sanctuary in English pastures.

Neither player had been able to play enough clay court matches ahead of Paris, chiefly because they are still in the process of rehabilitating after injuries. Henman's elbow, like Rusedski's wrist, seems to have survived the test.

"My elbow feels a hundred per cent," Henman said. "Having said that, I think it will be interesting to see how it reacts

tomorrow. That's when I had the problems in Rome. It felt fine during the match, but next day it was very, very stiff. I do definitely feel that on this occasion there is not going to be such a reaction."

As for his four matches on clay since undergoing surgery to the elbow after losing in his opening match at the Lipton Championships in Florida in

March, Henman said: "I haven't had the best of results, but I wouldn't say I'm greatly surprised. My preparation probably hasn't been the best. I want in the future to be feeling comfortable playing on the surface three or four weeks before the French, so then I can improve come this time of each year. That's when I'll be playing my best clay court tennis."

Martina Hingis and Steffi Graf, seeded in the women's singles final, wasted no time asserting themselves yesterday. The 16-year-old Hingis, playing her first match since knee surgery, defeated Hana Nagyova, of Slovakia, 6-0, 6-2. Graf, the defending champion, eased past Paola Suarez of Argentina 6-1, 6-4.

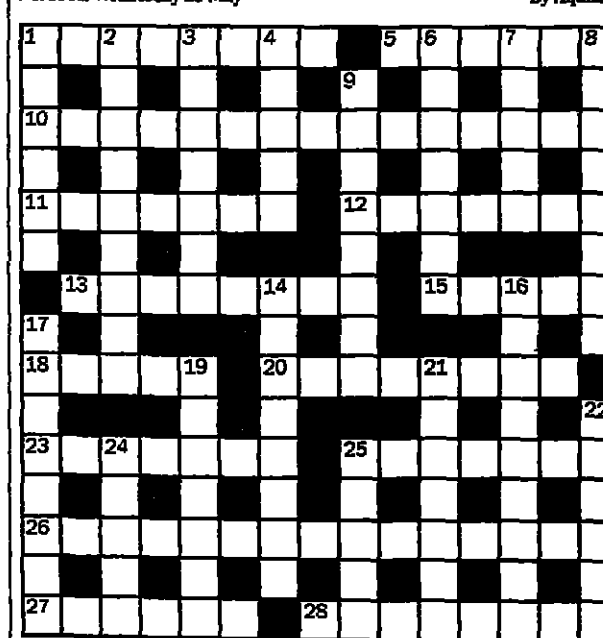
Results, page 27

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3318, Wednesday 28 May

By Aquila

Tuesday's Solution



ACROSS
1 It shows the way to put name to correspondence (8)
5 Charge for a square, broad-headed nail (6)
10 What proves that blood is thicker than water? (8,7)
11 Beyond doubt, new Conservative rally must have energy in it (7)
12 In America, overawe expert with a look (7)
13 Stifling run in contemporary garb (8)
15 Group of fatty compounds Philip identified near the heart (5)
18 Prior, a wine-maker? (5)
20 Dash on motorway shows one such error (8)
23 Umpire, given bad weather, has to stop (7)

DOWN
1 Trim Norwegian wood (6)
2 Spiky plant very successful on pole? (9)
3 Supporter of mine? (3-4)
4 Two volumes absorbed in utter comprehension (5)
6 A French flute arrangement that is melodious (7)
7 A country residence long abandoned here in Spain (5)
8 Openers keeping promise in headings? (8)

Gatting relinquishes Middlesex captaincy

DEREK PRINGLE

Cricket Correspondent

Mike Gatting, the longest serving county captain still playing, is to step down from the role he has held at Middlesex since the retirement of Mike Brearley 14 years ago. Gatting will hand the reins over to his deputy Mark Ramprakash, who will officially take up his new post at Lord's tomorrow when Middlesex play Northamptonshire in the County Championship.

The handover, which was due to take place at the end of the season, comes at a time when Middlesex have made one of their poorest ever starts to a season, one that has included becoming the first county to lose to Ireland in the Benson and Hedges Cup, a competition in which they failed to win a single match. Gatting, however, is no quitter and clearly feels that with the extra demands now made on him as an England selector, Middlesex's interests would be best served by a younger captain appointed sooner rather than later, though David Graveney, England's chairman of selectors, admitted yesterday that Gatting's move was a complete surprise to him.

"It's the end of an era," he said. "I haven't had chance to talk to Mike yet but he must have a very good reason for what he has done. No doubt I will find out what that is in time."

Nevertheless his decision to stand aside now will inevitably lead to speculation that this season, despite a playing contract until the end of next year, may be his last, especially if he

is made coach when Don Bennett retires at the end of this season.

If it is, he will depart having overseen one of the most successful periods ever seen at Middlesex. Since 1983, the county have won the Championship three times, both knock-out cups twice and the Sunday League once. It is a record only Essex - and they under two captains - can match over the same period.

They say good captains need good teams and Middlesex were

MIDDLESEX'S POST-WAR CAPTAINS

1946-47	R W V Robins
1946-48	F G Mann
1948-49	R W V Robins
1951-52	W J Edrich
1953-57	D C S Campion
1958-60	W J Edrich
1961-62	P I Bedford
1963-64	C D Dryburgh
1965-67	F J Titmus
1968	F J Titmus & P H Parfitt
1969-70	P H Parfitt
1971-82	J M Brearley
1983-97	M W Gatting
1997...	M R Ramprakash

SEASON SO FAR

1 Apr: Lost to Essex by 1 wkt (B&H).
3 Apr: Lost to Glamorgan by 7 runs (B&H).
5 Apr: Lost to Essex by 66 runs (AXA).
8 Apr: Draw with Sussex (CC).
13 Apr: Lost to Somerset by 27 runs (B&H).
15 Apr: Beat Derbyshire by 181 runs (CC).
18 Apr: Beat Derbyshire by 4 wks (B&H).
23 Apr: Lost to Warwickshire by 8 wks (CC).
26 Apr: Lost to Warwickshire by 106 runs.

County Championship P W D L Bat Bw Pts

Middlesex (7th) 3 1 1 4 5 12 36

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Bob Dylan hospital at heart scan

Bob Dylan, 50, is being treated for a heart condition at a hospital in New York. The singer, who has been in poor health for some time, was admitted to the hospital on Monday. He is expected to stay there for several weeks. Dylan's manager, Albert Grossman, said that the singer was "in good spirits" and was "doing well" in the hospital. He also said that Dylan was "not in any danger" and was "expected to make a full recovery".